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1900





THE LIFE OF
WILLIAM H. SEWARD

By
FREDERIC BANCROFT

WITH PORTRAITS

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.



NEW YORK AND LONDON
HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
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**THE LIFE OF
WILLIAM HENRY SEWARD**





THE LIFE OF WILLIAM HENRY SEWARD

CHAPTER XXV

THE WINTER OF 1860-61: SEWARD PRESERVES THE NATIONAL STATUS

THE election of Lincoln caused almost as great an outburst of joy in Charleston and New Orleans as it did in Boston and New York. The Republicans had gained the power to prevent the extension of slavery, but they were not more confident of realizing their long-cherished aim than the leaders of the cotton states were of founding a new confederacy in the near future.

Party interests had made it necessary for the Republicans to belittle the threats of secession, and they had succeeded so well that they fully deceived even themselves. Seward's past and present opinions illustrated this fact. When the jubilant citizens of Auburn crowded about him to hear his comments on the election he bade them dismiss all thoughts of the future until some new election should call them to renew their efforts in payment of the price of enduring liberty. The duty of the hour was to show magnanimity and moderation in triumph. Then came the idea, borrowed from Jefferson: "The parties engaged in an election are not, never can be, never must be, enemies, or even adversaries. We are

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all fellow-citizens, Americans, brethren." An appeal would lie from the people this year by making new arguments to the people next year. This had been the custom of the Republicans in the past. If, contrary to that custom, others should attempt to take a more hurried appeal by marshalling armies and pulling down the pillars of the republic, "let us not doubt," he said, "that if we commend our way by our patience, our gentleness, our affection toward them, they, too, will, before they shall have gone too far, find out that our way, the old way, their old way as well as our old way, is not only the shortest but the best."¹

But the rumors of the secession movements called him to Washington before the end of November. There he found that the ultra-southern men were bent on disunion, not on account of grievances, as he wrote, "but from cherished disloyalty and ambition," and that the Republicans were "ignorant of the real design or danger." For himself, he said: "I begin to see my way through, without sacrifice of principle. But I talk very little, and nothing in detail."² When he found that there was no harmony of opinion among the Republicans, he urged them to adopt a friendly and fraternal silence—not the sullen one of the previous year.³

As yet the public had only the vaguest suspicions as to how Seward intended to deal with the serious problem, and these suspicions were derived from rumors and from some of Weed's articles in the *Evening Journal*. Shortly after the election Weed declared that he would favor the extension of the Missouri-compromise line to California, and also an alteration of the fugitive-slave law so as to make the counties in which slaves should be rescued liable for their value. He felt confident

¹ 4 Seward's *Works*, 115, 116.

² 2 Seward, 478.

³ 2 Seward, 479.

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that there was imminent danger of disunion; that this could be averted only by drawing out, strengthening, and combining the Union sentiment of the whole country, and that the Republicans could afford to be tolerant of southern misunderstandings of Republican principles and aims. Hence he favored a constitutional convention for hearing and correcting the grievances of each section.¹

In his annual message of 1860 Buchanan maintained both that a state had no constitutional right to secede and that the Federal government had no constitutional power to prevent secession. He overlooked the fact that there was not only a constitutional right but a duty to forestall an attack upon the property of the nation and to forearm against resistance to the collection of the revenue. Had he been mindful of this, and acted accordingly, it seems likely that he could have prevented secession from attaining any substantial existence. Seward wittily characterized Buchanan's reasoning by saying: "It shows conclusively that it is the duty of the President to execute the laws—unless somebody opposes him; and that no state has a right to go out of the Union—unless it wants to."²

Immediately after the message had been read an angry discussion about secession and slavery broke forth in both chambers. The leaders of the cotton states, with "knit brows and portentous scowls," pointed angry speeches at their victorious opponents; they enumerated violations of the Constitution by the Republicans, and gave notice that withdrawal from the Union would be their means of redress. Hale replied that he could show aggressions on the part of the South that would infinitely outweigh and outnumber all that could be counted against the North; that if the alternative were

¹ For the article of November 30, 1860, see 1 Greeley's *American Conflict*, 360.

² Seward, 480.

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the acceptance of secession or the waging of war against a revolt to escape the results of a constitutional election, his choice would be for the latter.¹ Then Iverson, of Georgia, exclaimed: "We will meet . . . all the myrmidons of abolitionism and black Republicanism everywhere, upon our soil; and . . . we will 'welcome you with bloody hands to hospitable graves.'"² Unfortunately the advocates of resistance against secession were destined to be in a helpless minority for three months, while the secessionists had the advantage of that time in which to develop and execute their plans. So the southern extremists devoted themselves to arousing sentiment in favor of a slave-holding confederacy. On the other hand, most of the radical Republicans insisted that, as their party had not violated the Constitution, they must yield neither to the demands for compromise nor to secession, but that all the states must remain in the Union and await the effect of the changing opinion of the North.

Although each house soon appointed a special committee to consider the best means to allay the excitement, the breach widened and the strength of disunion increased. Many of the Garrisonian abolitionists rejoiced in the prospect of realizing their dogma, "No union with slave-holders."³

With vastly more injurious effect, the New York *Tribune*, the most influential of the Republican newspapers, had proclaimed, in November, that if several states should decide to secede, they should be allowed to depart in peace, in deference to the sacred right of revolution.⁴ Nearly all of the Bell-Everett party, and most of the

¹ *Globe*, 1860-61, 9, 10.

² *Ibid.*, 12.

³ "Sacrifice anything to keep the slave-holding states in the Union? God forbid! We will rather build a bridge of gold and pay their toll over it," exclaimed Wendell Phillips in January, 1861.—1 *Speeches*, 854.

⁴ 1 Greeley's *American Conflict*, 859.

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• Democrats, were opposed to enforcing the laws at any point where the secessionists threatened resistance. And the inhabitants of the southern border states were almost unanimous in demanding at least the adoption of measures—best expressed in the Crittenden compromise—that would make slavery secure where it then existed and in every part of the present and future territory of the United States south of the Missouri-compromise line, and that would remove the obstructions to the return of fugitive slaves. With one voice the thousand commercial interests of northern cities also called upon Congress to avoid war by making some such concession to the South.

The rarest opportunity for immortal fame ever offered to a President was at this time thrust upon Buchanan. Had he spoken and acted promptly and boldly in defence of Federal property, the whole North and a large proportion of the people in North Carolina, Tennessee, and the southern border states would have supported him. Then Lincoln's administration would have fallen heir to the policy of national self-defence. But Buchanan's arm was nerveless and his reason weak. Habitual servility to the southern leaders made him unwilling to oppose his old political friends even when he knew that they were plotting treason. Although he was sincerely in favor of preserving the Union, it would have been difficult for the secessionists to find a more serviceable President. As John Sherman sarcastically wrote at the time: "The Constitution provided against every probable vacancy in the office of President; but did not provide for utter imbecility."¹

Appearances soon indicated that the President's indecision and the anger of the coercionists would render haste on the part of the secessionists both urgent and

¹ *The Sherman Letters*, 95.

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easy. If the Union was to be maintained, it must be done under Republican leadership. Yet the members of the other parties felt so confident that there was an ulterior purpose to make unconstitutional inroads upon slavery that they were unwilling to support the Republicans. Even the victors themselves saw that they might precipitate hostilities without having the strength necessary for successful resistance. The possibility that vigorous measures might result in a civil war caused many even of their own partisans to look with favor upon some of the propositions for compromise. Hence there was danger that Lincoln might come into power with the strength of his party much reduced since November, confronted with an organized confederacy of several states, and with an opposition at home that would make any attempt to conquer secession futile, if not foolhardy.

Before Congress had time to consider any compromises, the leading secessionists issued an appeal urging every slave-holding state to "seek speedy and absolute separation from the unnatural and hostile Union."¹ This fanned the cotton-state fires into a blaze. On December 20, 1860, South Carolina passed an ordinance of secession. Then she sent commissioners to Washington to seek recognition of her independence, and despatched agents to urge other states hurriedly to withdraw from the Union and to choose delegates to a southern congress. The business interests of the North were greatly affected. No one could anticipate events for more than a few hours. Yet secession was still in a theoretical stage; no violence had been used against the Federal government, although it had been threatened. Buchanan had not positively announced what his position would be in that event. Naturally, Lincoln had not

¹ McPherson's *Political History of the Rebellion*, 37.



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yet shaped a definite policy, and did not wish to be held responsible for one before his time.

Seward's past no less than his present position in his party gave him special responsibilities and opportunities in such a crisis. Every one regarded him as the foremost Republican. At times he had talked like a radical, but he had always acted upon the maxim that the highest statesmanship consists in getting the best results from actual conditions. No one on his side of the Senate, and perhaps no one in either house, had such pleasant personal relations with the other members of Congress. It was assumed as a matter of course that he would be the controlling influence in the coming administration. His pre-eminence, together with his immovable calmness, when others were excited, caused the country to suppose that he had a solution for the difficulties, and that his actions would be indicative of Lincoln's present opinions and future policy. But for weeks he carefully refrained from expressing his opinions publicly; privately he wrote such sentences as these:

December 7: "The madcaps of the South want to be inflamed, so as to make their secession irretrievable. Good men there want moderation on the part of the government, so that they may in time produce a counter-movement." December 8: "I am, thus far, silent, not because I am thinking of proposing compromises, but because I wish to avoid, myself, and restrain other Republicans, from intermeddling, just now—when concession, or solicitation, or solicitude would encourage, and demonstrations of firmness of purpose would exasperate."

In the middle of December he went North intending to spend the holidays at home. He had declined an invitation to attend the annual dinner of the New England Society in New York, December 22d. But senatorial duties made it urgent for him to be in Washington Monday, December 24th. Leaving Auburn Saturday

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morning, the 22d, he arrived late that evening at the Astor House, where the members of the New England Society were still at table. As soon as his presence in the hotel became known, a special committee was sent to fetch him. He went reluctantly, and was received with such enthusiasm that he was compelled to speak. With humor in perfect harmony with the circumstances of his impressment and the mood of the banqueters over their *liqueurs* and cigars, he began by saying that he had heard they were all Yankees, and he inferred that they would, therefore, want to know all about the status. In colloquial phrases, with a pun or two, and with amusing repartee at their interjected questions, he made several diverting references to some of those present, and to a few matters in state and national politics.¹ He believed that the old centripetal force of common interest, which had drawn the states into a confederation and which the fathers had concisely expressed in *E pluribus unum*, still existed. Therefore, secession must be a passion, a delusion, a "humbug" even, which could not withstand a calm debate.

"We all know that [that New York would go to the defence of Charleston in case of her being attacked by a foreign nation]; everybody knows that: therefore they do not humbug me with their secession. I do not believe they will humbug you, and I do not believe that if they do not humbug you or me that they will succeed very long in humbugging themselves."

Here was his first hint of a dangerous illusion, as will be seen later. He concluded with an expression of his opinion that the agitation for secession had steadily declined in strength since the day of the election, and

¹ 1 Moore's *Rebellion Record*, Documents, pp. 4-7, and N. Y. *Times* of December 24th, give verbatim reports of the speech, indicating the applause and interruptions. The speech printed in 4 *Works*, 644-50, omits much and is a careful revision.

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that "sixty days' more suns will give you a much brighter and more cheerful atmosphere."¹

At the time many were shocked by Seward's levity, and he has been severely criticised since because he was jovial, evasive, and over-optimistic, rather than serious, frank, and precise. While the censure is not altogether unjust, it at least overlooks two most important facts: that it was still too soon for the Republican leaders to have shaped a definite policy; and that, in any case, this occasion would have been a most unfit one on which to explain it. It was necessary for Seward to speak in order to prevent damaging inferences; he had spoken without creating excitement or committing himself or his party to any plans for the future. His opinions were soothing and tentative, and the extraordinary applause with which they were received was good evidence that they were opportune. Two days later he partially explained his optimism by saying: "Stocks were up and commercial skies were brightening. The apprehension of disunion had, for that reason, visibly abated."²

On December 24th he met his colleagues of the "Union Saving Committee of Thirteen." With the unanimous consent of the members from his section, he offered three propositions: First, that the Constitution should never be altered so as to authorize Congress to abolish or interfere with slavery in the states; second, that the fugitive-slave law should be amended so as to grant a jury-trial to the fugitive; third, that Congress should request all the states to revise their legislation concerning persons recently resident in other states, and to repeal all laws that contravened the Constitution of the United States or any law of Congress made in pursuance there-

¹ Moore's *Rebellion Record*, Documents, p. 7. This prophecy was left out of his *Works*.

² Seward, 488.

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of. Later he offered a fourth proposition: that Congress should pass a law to punish invasions of one state from another, and conspiracies to effect such invasions.¹ Of the other propositions Seward wrote to Lincoln: "With the unanimous consent of our section [of the committee—Seward, Collamer, Doolittle, Grimes, and Wade], I offered three propositions which seemed to me to cover the ground of the suggestion made by you, through Mr. Weed, as I understand it."² Hence there was nothing peculiar about Seward's position as indicated at this time.

¹ 2 Seward, 484; Senate Reports, 2d Sess. 36th Con., No. 288, pp. 10, 11, 13.

² 2 Seward, 484. Heretofore it has been supposed that Lincoln's memorandum, "prepared for the consideration of the Republican members" of the Senate committee of thirteen had been lost, and his biographers seem never to have known its precise wording. A separate sheet in the Seward MSS. contains these sentences (and nothing else) in Lincoln's handwriting:

"Resolved:

"That the fugitive slave clause of the Constitution ought to be enforced by a law of Congress, with efficient provisions for that object, not obliging private persons to assist in its execution, but punishing all who resist it, and with the usual safeguards to liberty, securing free men against being surrendered as slaves—

"That all state laws, if there be such, really, or apparently, in conflict with such law of Congress, ought to be repealed; and no opposition to the execution of such law of Congress ought to be made—

"That the Federal Union must be preserved."

That this is the original "suggestion" is indicated by the following sentences from Seward's letter already referred to: "This evening, the Republican members of the committee, with Judge Trumbull and Mr. Fessenden, met at my house, to consider your written suggestion, and determine whether it shall be offered. While we think the ground has been already covered, we find that, in the form you give it, it would divide our friends, not only in the committee, but in Congress, a portion being unwilling to give up their old opinion, that the duty of executing the constitutional provisions, concerning fugitives from service, belongs to the states, and not at all to Congress."—2 Seward, 484. The first of Seward's formal propositions, made about a fortnight later, as a means of preserving peace gave the gist of Lincoln's first point. See *post*, p. 14.

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During the holidays the excitement in Washington greatly increased. The President's communications with the commissioners from South Carolina precipitated an angry outbreak between the two factions in the Cabinet. It was rumored, and widely believed, that the city was to be seized by the secessionists. Seward's intimate relations with loyal Democrats in the Cabinet, in the Senate, and in the South, enabled him to keep himself informed of all that was occurring, and he made long reports to Lincoln. So rapidly did the secession frenzy seem to have spread that on the last day of December he thought the country to be in an "emergency of probable civil war and dissolution of the Union."¹ By January 3, 1861, the secessionists had gained such strength at the White House and in some of the departments that Seward considered it necessary, as he wrote, to "assume a sort of dictatorship for defence," and to work night and day against the contemplated revolution. And he added: "My hope, rather my confidence, is unabated."²

The question of separation was hotly discussed in all the slave states, and it was everywhere alleged that the Republicans intended to put their antislavery ideas into practice after the inauguration. However, in North Carolina, Arkansas, Tennessee, and the border states, the majority deprecated the dissolution of the Union. Fortunately, Virginia believed that both slavery and state rights could be preserved within the Union. The very fact that the leaders of the cotton states were riding with whip and spur aroused a considerable feeling of opposition.³ But

¹ 2 Seward, 489.

² 2 Seward, 491.

³ Early in January, 1861, Governor Letcher sent a message to the extra session of the Virginia legislature, in which he indignantly protested against the efforts that South Carolina and Mississippi were making to compel the border slave states to join the secession movement by threatening to cut off the market for their slaves. He would,

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unless this opposition should be encouraged, it was sure to disappear; for there was a wide-spread and genuine fear, which in most instances amounted to a conviction, that Republican rule would inevitably undermine slavery, and, therefore, that its safety demanded a slave-holding confederacy.

For the Republicans there was but one of two courses to pursue. Charles Sumner saw the difficulty as plainly as Seward, and stated the problem a few days later by writing: "People are anxious to save our forts . . . ; but I am more anxious far to *save our principles*. . . ." Talking of force and of saving principles served a good purpose in keeping up the flagging spirit of many persons at the North, but it also helped to fuse, rather than to separate, the different elements at the South.

During the debates in Congress it was the Southerners that had kindled enthusiasm and applause. The angry logic of the Northerners was no match for the picturesque and defiant declamation of their opponents. By January 11th, Mississippi, Florida, and Alabama had followed South Carolina's example. Time and the discussion of constitutional grievances had deepened southern convictions and exhibited the helplessness of the Republicans. It was announced that Seward would speak on January 12th. This aroused intense curiosity, because there were such conflicting rumors about his plans. Accordingly, on the day of his speech the audience was larger than had ever before assembled in the Senate-chamber.²

Seward declared his purpose to be to seek a truce from

he said, resist southern coercion as readily as northern.—Richmond Semi-Weekly *Enquirer*, January 8, 1861.

¹ 4 Pierce, 17. Before the end of January, he thought it not unlikely that all the slave states, except possibly Maryland (and Delaware, doubtless) would be out of the Union very soon.—*Ibid.*, 16.

² N. Y. *Tribune*, January 14, 1861; 2 Seward, 493, 494.]

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dogmatic battles, and to appeal to the country—to the seceding South no less than to the acceding North—on the question of union. Lest his mildness might be interpreted to mean acquiescence in secession, he said: "I . . . avow my adherence to the Union in its integrity and with all its parts, with my friends, with my party, with my state, with my country, or without either, as they may determine; in every event, whether of peace or of war; with every consequence of honor or dishonor, of life or death." The only way to dissolve the Union, he maintained, was by constitutional amendment; but Congress should, if it could, redress any real grievances, and then supply the President with all the means necessary to defend the Union.

For thirty years Seward had believed and frequently declared that the Union was natural and necessary, as well as politically and economically expedient. Our people were homogeneous and our government beneficent. Disunion would bring us humiliation abroad and war and ruin at home. It would endanger rather than preserve slavery; for it would forfeit all but a small fraction of the territory of the United States, and remove every constitutional barrier against a direct attack upon slavery. Dissolution would not only arrest but it would extinguish the greatness of our country; it would drop the curtain before all our national heroes; public prosperity would give place to retrogression, for standing armies would consume our substance; and our liberty, now as wide as our grand territorial dimensions, would be succeeded by the hateful and intolerable espionage of military despotism. The issue, then, was really between those who cherished the Union and those who desired its dissolution by force.*

* 4 *Works*, 651.

* This is the merest outline of several grand passages.—4 *Works*, 654-65.

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It was as much Seward's duty to avoid saying anything that could be turned to the advantage of secession as to urge considerations that would directly strengthen national sentiment. Jefferson Davis had said, two days before, that if the doctrine of coercion were accepted as the theory of the government, its only effect would be to precipitate men of his opinion into an assertion of their ideas.¹ Seward now averred that there was no political good that he would seek by revolutionary action. Then, in sentences that were designed to soothe the South, he announced :

“ If others shall invoke that form of action to oppose and overthrow government, they shall not, so far as it depends on me, have the excuse that I obstinately left myself to be misunderstood. In such a case I can afford to meet prejudice with conciliation, exaction with concession which surrenders no principle, and violence with the right hand of peace.”

As evidence of what he was willing to do for the sake of peace and harmony, he formulated his views under five heads:

First, he acknowledged the full force of the fugitive-slave clause of the Constitution, but thought that the special provisions for its execution should be so modified as not to endanger the liberty of free blacks, or to compel private citizens to assist in the capture of slaves. He also favored the repeal both of the personal-liberty laws of the free states and of the laws of the slave states that contravened the Constitution by restricting the liberties of citizens from the other states.

Second, slavery in the states was free from congressional control, and he was willing to make it so permanently by constitutional amendment.

Third, after the admission of Kansas as a free state,

¹ *Globe*, 1860-61, 810.

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he would consent to the consolidation of all the territories into two states, and admit them without restriction as to slavery, if the right to make subdivisions into several convenient states could be reserved. But he thought that the Constitution did not permit such reservation. If it were feasible, he would prefer to have the present difficulties settled in a regular constitutional convention, "when the eccentric movements of secession and disunion shall have ended, in whatever form that end may come, and the angry excitement of the hour shall have subsided, . . . then, and not till then—one, two, three years hence."

Fourth, he would favor laws to prevent invasion of any state by citizens of any other state.

Fifth, since he regarded physical bonds—such as highways, railroads, rivers, and canals—as vastly more powerful than any covenants, he would support measures for a northern and for a southern railroad to the Pacific.

In general explanation he added :

"If, in the expression of these views, I have not proposed what is expected or desired by others, they will do me the justice to believe that I am so far from having suggested what, in many respects, would have been in harmony with cherished convictions of my own. I learned from Jefferson that, in political affairs, we cannot always do what seems to us absolutely best. . . . We must be content to lead when we can, and to follow when we cannot lead ; and if we cannot, at any time, do for our country all the good that we would wish, we must be satisfied with doing for her all the good that we can."

The concluding sentences of this speech were a fitting climax to his appeal for forbearance and union :

"Soon enough, I trust, for safety, it will be seen that sedition and violence are only local and temporary, and that loyalty and affection to the Union are the natural sentiments of the whole country. Whatever dangers there shall be, there will be the determination to meet them ;

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whatever sacrifices, private or public, shall be needful for the Union, they will be made. I feel sure that the hour has not come for this great nation to fall. . . . This Union has not yet accomplished what good for mankind was manifestly designed by Him who appoints the seasons and prescribes the duties of states and empires. N ; if it were cast down by faction to-day, it would rise again and reappear in all its majestic proportions to-morrow. It is the only government that can stand here. Woe! woe! to the man that madly lifts his hand against it. It shall continue and endure; and men, in after times, shall declare that this generation, which saved the Union from such sudden and unlooked-for dangers, surpassed in magnanimity even that one which laid its foundations in the eternal principles of liberty, justice, and humanity."

Seward's patriotic eloquence was so impressive that more than one Senator was seen to express his sympathy in tears.¹ If the plan was inadequate it was because human ingenuity was inadequate to the task. Considering the actual conditions and what was most urgent at that time, there is reason to believe that this was as wise, as patriotic, and as important a speech as has ever been delivered within the walls of the Capitol. If Seward had spoken as most of the Republicans had done, or if he had gone no farther than Lincoln had even confidentially expressed a willingness to go, by March 4th there would have been no Union that any one could have summoned sufficient force to save or to re-establish. To Seward, almost alone, belongs the credit of devising a *modus vivendi*. But the country was too excited to estimate justly the value of such a speech.²

¹ 2 Seward, 494; 4 Works, 118.

² Seward wrote home on January 13th: "Distraction rules the hour. I hope what I have done will bring some good fruits, and, in any case, clear my own conscience of responsibility, if, indeed, I am to engage in conducting a war against a portion of the American people." —2 Seward, 496. And again the next day: "The city is bewildered by the speech. But things look better."—*Ibid.*

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Nearly every one demanded a comprehensive declaration either for compromise and peace or for coercion and war. The zeal of the abolitionists and of the secessionists had bred a fanaticism that made the importance of preserving the Union seem small indeed. While Garrison attacked Seward, he called upon the North to "recognize the fact that the Union is dissolved."¹ Sumner and Chase had protested in advance against Seward's sentiments, and they deplored them afterwards.² So general was the disapprobation of the Republican Representatives that it was feared they would call a caucus to pass resolutions in disapproval of Seward's ideas.³ Even Mrs. Seward objected to what she called his "concessions."⁴ Many persons understood the conciliatory tone to be equivalent to a promise to make a concession of principle.⁵ On the other hand, Lincoln wrote: "Your recent speech is well received here, and, I think, is doing good all over the country."⁶ Ray Palmer praised it in the highest terms, and pronounced it worthy of "the distinguished men of the best days of the republic."⁷ George William Curtis wrote to a friend: "I hope you like Seward's speech as I do. I see by the New York papers that people are beginning to see how great a speech it is. Webster had his 7th of March, and went wrong; Seward his, and went right."⁸

On January 31st Seward presented a petition signed by many thousand citizens of New York, praying for a peaceable adjustment of the national difficulties. He told the Senate that he had asked the committee that had

¹ "And if nothing but the possession of the capital will appease you, take even that, without a struggle!"—4 *Garrison*, 15.

² 4 *Pierce's Sumner*, 9, 17, 22; Schuckers's *Chase*, 202.

³ Grimes to Seward, January 12, 1861. Seward MSS.

⁴ 2 Seward, 496.

⁵ John M. Williams to Seward, January 16, 1861. Seward MSS.

⁶ January 19, 1861. Seward MSS.

⁷ January 15, 1861. Seward MSS.

⁸ Cary's *Curtis*, 141.

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brought the memorial to him to manifest, on their return home, their devotion to the Union, above all other interests and sentiments, by speaking for it, by voting for it, by lending it money, if it needed it, and, in the last resort, by fighting for it.' Again he expressed his hope and confidence that the Union would still be preserved. One reason for this was his belief that the great question of the past—slavery in the territories—had been practically settled, and that, too, in the interest of freedom. In opposition to what freedom had gained by the admission of the free states of California, Minnesota, Oregon, and Kansas, slavery could count but twenty-four slaves in all the remaining territories, which were about twenty-four times the size of New York. There was no further danger from slavery, and the question of union or dissolution might well be given precedence. At the conclusion of this speech, Mason sprang to his feet and made a persistent effort to misrepresent what had been said by Seward, whom he called "the exponent of the new administration." "Let the facts be what they may, he presents but one remedy—the argument of the tyrant—force, compulsion, power"; and the Virginian hoped by reiterating the idea to excite the people of his section into immediate action.² In his most placid manner, Seward expressed surprise that his peaceful, fraternal, and cordial remarks could be construed into a declaration of war. He had considered every proposition, he said; offered up his own prejudices; made concessions and recommended New York to take part in the peace conference, in the hope of effecting an arrangement; and if all should fail, he expected that the controversy would be taken up and settled in a constitutional convention. In comparison with the question of union, the controversy about twenty-four slaves was "frivolous and contemptible."

¹ *4 Works*, 671.

² *Globe*, 1860-61, 659.

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What good came of Seward's declarations in favor of conciliation, enigmatical and self-contradictory as some of them were? "Before I spoke," he wrote to Weed, January 21st, "not one utterance made for the Union elicited a response in either house, while every assault brought down full galleries. Since I spoke there have not been four hundred persons in the galleries any day, and every word for the Union brings forth a cheering response."¹ This was an exaggeration,² but the *Globe* shows that applause of unionist sentiment was much more frequent after his speech than before it. Hundreds of thousands of northern Democrats soon began to realize that they and the conservative Republicans had a common cause. Seward renewed intimate relations with many of his old southern Whig associates and obtained important information. Within a week from the first speech, Virginia—although both of her Senators were determined secessionists—invited all the states to join her in a peace conference in Washington, February 4th. North Carolina, Tennessee, and every border state welcomed the proposal. This of itself was a practical guaranty against revolutionary movements in these states and at the national capital pending the conference. On February 2d, Kentucky requested the southern states to stop the revolution, protested against Federal coercion, proposed a national convention to amend the Constitution, and declined to call a state convention to consider secession.³ On February 4th Virginia chose delegates to a state convention. Only a small number of immediate secessionists were successful.⁴ On the 8th, Tennessee decided against a state

¹ 2 Seward, 497.

² Wade caused "applause in galleries," December 17, 1860 (*Globe*, 104), by a strong Union speech. The *Globe* records no applause in connection with Seward's speech of January 12th.

³ McPherson, 8.

⁴ Colonel Ritchie, who was sent by Governor Andrew on an impor-

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convention by a popular majority of over thirteen thousand.' Later in the month, North Carolina rejected a proposition for a convention.' The southern border states became calmer, and hoped for the Union. Seward's attitude greatly helped to bring about these results.

Seward's public declarations and senatorial duties represent but a small part of his activity. Since December he had been in confidential relations with Attorney-General Stanton and General Scott,¹ who united to counteract the influences of Floyd, Davis, Cobb, Thompson, Slidell, and several South Carolinians, who were alternately wheedling and frightening Buchanan. From Stanton he received secret advice daily as to what was going on in the Cabinet.² Late in January rumors of an attempt to seize the capital were again rife. Seward drafted a resolution, which Galusha A. Grow introduced in the House, directing a committee to investigate whether there was any secret organization in the District hostile to the Government, and to report if any officials or employees of the executive or judicial departments were members of it.³ By the middle of January the financial credit of the United States had sunk very low. The new Secretary of the Treasury,

tant mission, reported, February 6, 1861: "He (Sumner) is convinced that the conspirators counted upon a different result in Virginia; that, by the 18th, the Virginia convention would have pronounced for secession; and that they were, therefore, safe in calling the Maryland convention for that day, being sure that in that event Maryland would follow suit. If the result of the Virginia election had been in favor of the secessionists, the attack on the capital might have been carried out without waiting for the formal action of the Virginia convention."—1 Schouler's *Massachusetts in the Civil War*, 36.

¹ McPherson, 5.

² *Ibid.*

³ 2 Seward, 493, 507.

⁴ 2 Seward, 492; 26 *Atlantic Monthly*, 464, 465; ex-Senator Dawes' recollections, in 72 *Atlantic Monthly*, 163.

⁵ For the resolution, see *Globe*, 1860-61, 572. Mr. Grow told the writer in 1894 that the object of offering the resolution was to convince plotters that their movements were well known.

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John A. Dix, brought forward a proposition that the different states should guarantee the bonds of the national government to the extent of the surplus revenue that was deposited with them in 1837. Seward became so zealous to obtain the support of the New York legislature for this project that he sent a special messenger to Albany.¹ Lincoln and many others had felt much concern lest on February 13th, the day for counting the electoral votes, a revolt might be started, beginning with Congress. But before that date the investigation of the committee of the House, the collection of troops in Washington by General Scott, and the daily meetings of the peace conference all stood in the way of the success of such a plan, if, indeed, it had ever been formally adopted. Seward knew that as long as the peace conference could be kept in session all the states represented in it could be held in the Union. When one of the Republican delegates made a vigorous and warning speech in reply to the southern demands for constitutional guarantees, it looked as if the convention might speedily dissolve in anger and excitement.² Seward sent for the Republican delegate and read to him a long editorial from an ardent secession newspaper in Richmond, warning its friends that Seward was merely temporizing with the South so as to get the new administration firmly settled in power. Seward's tones and the general character of his non-committal remarks convinced the caller that the article explained his aim, and that, therefore, it was important for the Republicans to avoid arousing the Southerners.³

¹ 2 *Weed*, 319. He also asked Governor Andrew to urge the Massachusetts legislature to guarantee the bonds.—1 Schouler's *Massachusetts in the Civil War*, 87.

² Chittenden's *Conference Convention*, 105.

³ Experience and recollections of George S. Boutwell, recounted to the writer in 1894.

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Seward's efforts were untiring, and reached out in other directions. At a dinner given to the French Minister by Senator Douglas, Seward proposed this toast, asking the company to fill their glasses to the brim and to drain them to the bottom: "Away with all parties, all platforms of previous committals, and whatever else will stand in the way of the restoration of the American Union!"¹ Seward and Stanton started a patriotic movement that caused the national flag to be displayed throughout the North on Washington's birthday, 1861.² On February 13th the Virginia convention assembled. The unionism of a large majority of its members merely meant that they would oppose secession as long as there was reason to expect that the Republicans would not use force against any southern state and that a compromise would be made giving security to slave property. Seward's supremacy was the hope of all these men, for he had convinced them that he had a plan that would prevent the immediate secessionists from controlling. Letters from prominent Virginia politicians and from his special agents kept him informed of the trend of opinion in the state convention at Richmond.³ It is striking evidence of the caution of Seward's management that he seems neither to have written to the correspondents nor to have told them his precise purposes. Yet he retained their confidence after the peace conference proved to be a failure and the two leading Virginia delegates, ex-President Tyler and James A. Seddon, returned home and tried to hurry their state into secession.

¹ MS. recollections of J. A. Campbell, then one of the Justices of the Supreme Court.

² Seward to William Schouler, June 13, 1867, 1 Schouler's *Massachusetts in the Civil War*, 41; 2 Seward, 491.

³ These statements are based on many letters in the Seward MSS. For some of the most important of these letters, see Appendix.

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Lincoln had not yet expressed his opinions as to the best way to deal with the seven states already practically in the Confederacy. But about two points he had left no room for doubt: that he would neither consent to a compromise guaranteeing new territory to slavery, nor agree to peaceable secession. He was not disposed to yield to southern demands; yet on several occasions he indicated that he would assent to any plan that would preserve peace and the Union without strengthening slavery.¹ Shortly after arriving in Washington, February 23d, Lincoln submitted to Seward for criticism a copy of his prospective inaugural address. In it he had planted himself firmly upon the Republican platform.² In several places sentences were lacking in tact, and occasional phrases had a flavor of dogmatism or severity, considering the times. It concluded with the suggestive sentence, "With you, and not with me, is the solemn question of 'Shall it be peace or a sword?'" It was all intended in a kindly spirit, and some passages were generous and touching, but other parts would have more than counteracted them.

Seward went through the entire address, making a sentence here and there less positive, rounding many of the phrases, and softening some of the adjectives. He counseled the omission of a few careless and useless sentences; and where Lincoln had written, "A disruption of the Federal Union is menaced, and, so far as can be on paper, is already effected," Seward changed the last part into "heretofore only menaced, is now formidably attempted." He suggested that, in lieu of the conclusion quoted, the address should end with "some words

¹ 2 *Weed*, 311; 1 *Lincoln's Works*, 657, 658, 661, 662, 669; Schuckers's *Chase*, 202; 2 *Seward*, 484, 485.

² 3 Nicolay and Hay's *Lincoln*, 327-44, gives Seward's suggestions, the wording of the original draft, and the inaugural address as delivered.

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of affection, some of calm and cheerful confidence," and wrote the striking paragraph about "our bonds of affection" and "the mystic chords," which, only slightly changed, became one of Lincoln's most impressive passages.

The letter that Seward sent when he returned the draft is too important to be abbreviated.

"Sunday Evening, February 24th.

"MY DEAR SIR,—I have suggested many changes, of little importance, severally, but, in their general effect, tending to soothe the public mind.

"Of course the concessions are, as they ought to be, if they are to be of avail, at the cost of the winning, the triumphant party. I do not fear their displeasure. They will be loyal, whatever is said. Not so the defeated, irritated, angered, frenzied party. I, my dear sir, have devoted myself singly to the study of the case here—with advantages of access and free communication with all parties of all sections. I have a common responsibility and interest with you, and I shall adhere to you faithfully in every case. You must, therefore, allow me to speak frankly and candidly. In this spirit I declare to you that my convictions that the *second* and *third* paragraphs, even if modified as I propose in my amendments, will give such advantage to the disunionists that Virginia and Maryland will secede; and we shall within ninety, perhaps within sixty days, be obliged to fight the South for this capital, with a divided North for our reliance; and we shall not have one loyal magistrate or ministerial officer south of the Potomac.

"In that case the dismemberment of the Republic would date from the inauguration of a Republican administration. I, therefore, most respectfully counsel the omission of those paragraphs. I know the tenacity of party friends, and I honor and respect it. But I know also that they know nothing of the real peril of the crisis. It has not been their duty to study it, as it has been mine. Only the soothing words which I have spoken have saved us and carried us along thus far. Every loyal man, and, indeed, every disloyal man in the South, will tell you this.

"Your case is quite like that of *Jefferson*. He brought

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the first Republican party into power against and over a party ready to resist and dismember the government. Partisan as he was, he sank the partisan in the patriot, in his inaugural address; and propitiated his adversaries by declaring, 'We are all Federalists; all Republicans.' I could wish that you would think it wise to follow this example, in this crisis. Be sure that while all your administrative conduct will be in harmony with Republican principles and policy, you cannot lose the Republican party by practising, in your advent to office, the magnanimity of a victor.

"Very faithfully your friend,

"WILLIAM H. SEWARD.

"GENERAL REMARKS

"The argument is strong and conclusive, and ought not to be in any way abridged or modified.

"But something besides, or in addition to, argument is needful to meet and remove *prejudice* and *passion* in the *South* and *despondency* and *fear* in the *East*: some words of affection; some of calm and cheerful confidence."¹

Nor was this the limit of Seward's soothing influence. He was especially anxious that Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederacy—the formation of which practically began at Montgomery, February 4th—should believe that Lincoln would favor reconciliation and peace. Seward knew that if Davis considered war to be inevitable, he would prepare the Confederacy for it, and thereby make the problem more difficult. Senator Gwin, of California, had been bred in the school of Calhoun, and continued to be the trusted friend and adviser of Davis. Seward and Gwin had been intimately associated as advocates of a railroad to the Pacific. Seward now persuaded Gwin to write to Davis saying that if Seward should go into Lincoln's Cabinet, he would be a firm advocate of the amicable settlement of every ques-

¹ 2 Seward, 512, 513.

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tion between the sections.¹ Shortly before the inauguration it became known that Chase was to go into Lincoln's Cabinet. In order to relieve himself from further responsibility, Gwin prepared a despatch to Jefferson Davis saying that this was understood to indicate a change to a war policy. When Ward showed the prospective despatch to Seward, he altered it so that Davis was advised that, in spite of Chase's appointment, the administration would be for peace.²

After watching a public man's words and acts concerning a question for several weeks or months, there would ordinarily be no doubt as to his opinions regarding it. But Seward believed that circumstances made it best to remain uncommitted as to the precise method that he thought would be effective.³ Nevertheless, he had certain definite aims. It will be less difficult to indicate what they were after we know whether he and Weed were substantially of one mind.

In the long article of November 30th, Weed twice declared that he spoke only for himself.⁴ Several times Seward implied or asserted that he was not responsible for Weed's course, but so far as is known he never directly affirmed that he was opposed to Weed's opinions.⁵ Weed and Seward saw shortly after the election

¹ Gwin's posthumous article in the *Overland Monthly*, 2d series, 467. Gwin and Seward often used Samuel Ward, popularly known as "King of the Lobby," and they met at his house to avoid attracting attention. A memorandum from Ward, written shortly after Lincoln's inaugural address, reports to Seward the receipt of this letter by Davis.—Seward MSS.

² 18 *Overland Monthly*, 2d series, 469.

³ "I talked very little, and nothing in detail," continued to be his rule. When writing confidentially to Lincoln he stated facts with precision, but he seemed studiously to keep back his own ideas as to remedies. Even then he enjoined secrecy, and added: "My power to do anything would be seriously impaired, if what I write were made known."—2 Seward, 484, 485.

⁴ 1 Greeley, 361.

⁵ December 2d, Seward wrote home: "You will see that Mr. Weed

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that the Southerners were in earnest and that civil war and disunion were threatened. What could be done to avert either or both depended upon the public opinion of the North. It was urgent that some one should make tentative propositions to test northern sentiment. Seward could not do this without wasting his popularity in mere experiments. So the initiative was left to

lets me out of responsibility for his well-intentioned but rather impulsive movements. He promised me to do so." The same letter said: "I am engaged busily in studying and gathering my thoughts for the Union." Evidently he had not fully made up his mind as to a course. (2 Seward, 479.) Again, December 4th: "Mr. Weed's articles have brought perplexities about me which he, with all his astuteness, did not foresee. But you need not expect, or rather fear, that I will act unwisely or wrong." (2 Seward, 480.) Notwithstanding these sentences, Mrs. Seward became so much concerned lest the Senator might favor a compromise that she wrote to him expressing her fears. Again he shunned giving her a clear and comprehensive answer: "I am, thus far, silent, not because I am thinking of proposing compromises, but because I wish to avoid, myself, and restrain other Republicans, from intermeddling." . . . (2 Seward, 480.) A Republican senatorial caucus was called on the first day of the session for the purpose of finding out if Seward agreed with Weed's suggestions about compromise. Seward snubbed his indiscreet colleagues, and declined to give them any satisfaction. (2 Weed, 308.)

A few days later, when the *Albany Evening Standard* asserted positively that he had aided in the preparation of an important article on compromise in the *Evening Journal*, the *Auburn Advertiser* printed the following: "Mr. Seward, in conversation, fully repudiates the telegraph and newspaper assumptions of his authority for or concurrence in the *Albany Journal's* article of yesterday. He says he wonders how long it will take newspapers to learn that when he desires to be heard he is in the habit of speaking in his proper place for himself."—Cited 3 Rhodes, 159. This is not considered final. Nor would it be if it were plainly authoritative, for Seward was determined to conceal his opinions. In public he called secession impossible and a "humbug," while in private he was conducting a "dictatorship for defence," and studying how to avert civil war and disunion. Had he openly approved Weed's course, the radical Republicans would have made a bold attack upon him, which would have deprived him of most of his influence in the party, and it would have cost him his prospective place in Lincoln's Cabinet. Even as it was, his difficulties were very great.

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the *Evening Journal*, of which his son Frederick, the future Assistant Secretary of State, was associate editor. The *New York Times* and the *Courier and Enquirer* followed. Weed and Seward were never in closer communication than during these months. Weed's two most elaborate articles, those of November 30th and December 17th, appeared just after he and Seward had held long conferences. Had there been any considerable difference in their opinions, Seward would hardly have asked Weed to go to Springfield to express to Lincoln his (Seward's) views on public affairs.¹ It has been positively stated that Weed favored the Crittenden compromise.² However, he objected to the proposition that in all the present and future territory south of 36° 30' slavery should be recognized, but he thought that that could be rendered satisfactory if provision should be made so that territory should be acquired only by treaty or by a two-thirds vote of Congress.³ Seward explained his non-committalism as to any specific plan, by telling the Senate, on January 31st, that no propositions had been offered that promised to bring about reconciliation.⁴ There was a close resemblance⁵ between the expressions employed by Seward and Weed respectively when speaking of the need of amending the

¹ 2 Seward, 482.

² 2 Weed, 812.

³ *Evening Journal*, December 19, 1860, January 22, 1861.

⁴ 4 Works, 671.

⁵ "Is it strange, then, that this complex system of our government should be found to work, after the lapse of seventy years, a little roughly, and that it requires that the engineer should look into the various parts of the engine, and see where the gudgeon is worn out, and watch that the main wheel be kept in motion?"

—Seward, 4 Works, 647.

"After more than seventy years of 'wear and tear,' of collision and abrasion, it should be no cause of wonder that the machinery of government is found weakened, or out of repair, or even defective."—Weed, quoted 1 Greeley, 361.

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Constitution and of the question of slavery in the territories.¹ Weed spoke with equal boldness for a compromise and in condemnation of Buchanan's failure to enforce the laws and to defend the forts.² Circumstances forbade that Seward should be explicit about either. However, no conflict of opinion on any essential point has been found, while numerous unmentioned signs indicate that they had a common aim. Each adopted the course best suited to his surroundings, but, nevertheless, they were in close alliance.³

¹ "There has been a real, a vital question in this country for twelve years at least—a question of slavery in the territories of the United States. . . . It has been an earnest and, I regret to say, an angry controversy; but the admission of Kansas into the Union yesterday settled at least all that was vital or important in the question, leaving behind nothing but the passions which the contest had engendered."—4 *Works*, 678.

"The continued blindness of the Democracy and the continued madness of slavery enabled us to elect Lincoln. That success ends our mission, so far as Kansas and the encroachments of slavery into free territory are concerned. We have no territory that invites slavery for any other than political objects, and, with the power of territorial organization in the hands of Lincoln, there is no political temptation in all the territory belonging to us. The fight is over. Practically the issues of the late campaign are obsolete."—Weed to Preston King, 2 *Weed*, 809.

² *Evening Journal*, December 21, 22, 1860, January 4, 11, 12, 16, 17, 22, and 25, 1861.

³ The following letters from Weed show that he and Seward were working together like the two hands of one man.

"ALBANY, January 9, [1861].

"DEAR SEWARD,—I am now less anxious about *time* than I was. Monday will answer and is better than you should be hurried.

"I wish I could see what you intend in its completeness. Now that you print speak for all. Words should be weighed.

"The war spirit is rising and raging. The sooner the war is, the safer the ground you propose to occupy. I enclose Mr. Lincoln's propositions, in the hope that you substantially accept his views on the two kindred questions.

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Seward was studiously equivocal or general in his expressions. When he went beyond this, he was particular to enjoin secrecy. This was not only justifiable, but it was also necessary as a means of using his peculiar position to the best advantage. Many of his expressions make it plain that he was much less concerned about what he should concede than about what could be conceded effectively and without danger to political interests. On December 26th he wrote to Lincoln: "Nothing could *certainly* restrain them [the border slave states from joining the cotton states], but the adoption of Mr. Crittenden's compromise. and I do not see the slightest indications of its adoption, on the Republican side of Congress."¹ Again on January 27, 1861, he sent these plaintive sentences:

"The appeals of the Union men in the border states for something of concession or compromise are very painful, since they say that without it their states must all go with the tide, and your administration must begin with the free states meeting all southern states in a hostile confederacy. Chance might render the separation perpetual. Disunion has been contemplated and discussed so long there that they have become frightfully familiar with it, and even such men as Mr. Scott and William C. Rives are so far disunionists as to think that they would have the right and

"I could not see Mr. Gilmer [probably about going into Lincoln's Cabinet], but hope that you have done so.

"Blatchford was off before I could see him.

"I return the letter.

"Truly yours,

"T. WEED.

"You see that the murder is out!" [This means that Seward's selection as Secretary of State is publicly reported.]

An undated note written a day or two earlier said:

"Mr. Gilmer was in committee. I go without seeing him.

"Pray work out your salvation and that of the country as speedily as you can. *Offer* all that is right and *demand* all that is due.

"I do so want it to be right that I shall think of nothing else.

"Swett should see Mr. Gilmer if you have not time." — Seward MSS.

¹ 2 Seward, 485.

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be wise in going if we will not execute new guaranties which would be abhorrent in the North. It is almost in vain that I tell them to wait, let us have a truce on slavery, put our issue on disunion, and seek remedies for ultimate griefs in a constitutional question [convention?]."

After a few sentences he made it still stronger :

"In any case you are to meet a hostile armed confederacy when you commence—you must reduce it by force or conciliation. The resort to force would very soon be denounced by the North, although so many are anxious for a fray. The North will not consent to a long civil war. A large portion, much the largest portion of the Republican party, are reckless now of the crisis before us; and compromise or concession, though as a means of averting dissolution, is intolerable to them. They believe that either it will not come at all, or be less disastrous than I think it will be."

As if to prevent the plain inference, he states his opinion—but not on this precise point :

"For my own part, I think that we must collect the revenues, regain the forts in the Gulf, and, if need be, maintain ourselves here; but that every thought that we think ought to be conciliatory, forbearing, and fraternal, and so open the way for the rising of a Union party in the seceding states which will bring them back into the Union."

In the same letter Seward said that he had had an interview with James Barbour, "the master-spirit of the Union party" in Virginia, who, he suggested, might be available as the southern member of the Cabinet for whom they were seeking. On February 8, 1861, this "master-spirit" wrote to Seward that he and other unionists had taken the ground that "secession ought to follow the extinction of the hope of constitutional amendments. I for one assumed that ground not only as expedient for the canvass, but as right in itself, as did many others." As early as January 21st the general

¹ 8 Nicolay and Hay, 365, 366.

² See Appendix, E.

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assembly of Virginia voted unanimously that honor and interest demanded that the state should unite her destiny with the slave-holding states of the South in case the efforts to reconcile the unhappy differences should fail;' and other Virginia correspondents, besides Barbour, expressed similar opinions to Seward.'

Early in the session Seward became convinced that Congress would not approve a satisfactory compromise amendment.¹ Therefore he concluded that the only practicable course would be to seek a remedy in a constitutional convention. After two-thirds of Congress had favored it, the balance of the work could be done by the states. So when the amendments proposed by the peace conference came before the Senate, and it was

¹ 2 Tyler's *Tylers*, 605.

² Although the recollection of a conversation that took place many years before may be unreliable, the following sentences, from a letter dated August 24, 1893, from James Barbour to the author, are worth quoting in connection with the foregoing speculation:

"I told him [Seward, at the interview referred to above] frankly that nothing materially less than the Crittenden compromise would allay it [the excitement] in Virginia. . . . He said, you have asked me if I would favor the Crittenden compromise. I am of your opinion that nothing short of that will allay the excitement, and therefore I will favor it substantially. . . .

"When about to leave Mr. Seward, I told him that I would state the purport of his conversation for publication. He requested me not to do so, as a premature publication of his views would destroy his influence to accomplish his purpose. . . .

"I took Washington in [on] my return trip, and again saw Governor Seward. He then remarked that the contest in Virginia had not been so close as I had expected, and in his opinion we could trust the Union sentiment in Virginia to an indefinite extent. This annoyed me, and I brusquely told him that if he acted on that view our state would secede in thirty days. He said I misunderstood his remark, and he still designed to do just as he had formerly told me."

³ On December 2d, he wrote to Weed: "No amendment that can be proposed, and would be satisfactory, can get two-thirds of both Houses, although just such amendments might pass three-fourths of the states in convention."—2 Seward, 479. See also 488.

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known that there was no prospect of their adoption by constitutional majorities, Seward offered a joint resolution requesting the legislatures of the states to consider the advisability of asking Congress to call a constitutional convention.¹ The definite propositions he offered were mere feelers, and it was generally understood that they did not represent all he would concede under favorable circumstances. If this was a mistaken inference, he had forced it. When he presented the long petition from New Yorkers, praying for a settlement of the sectional question on the basis of the border-state propositions—which were very similar to Crittenden's compromise, except that the protection of slavery in territory acquired in the future was not promised²—he said: "I have thought it my duty to hold myself open and ready for the best adjustment that could be practically made. . . ." On March 2d the Crittenden compromise and some resolutions offered by Senator Clark, of New Hampshire, declaring that the Constitution needed to be obeyed rather than amended, were put to a final test. Seward had been present earlier in the day, but he now voted neither for enforcing the Constitution and the laws nor for the compromise.³ He was, therefore, practically uncommitted as to any special action, except against recognizing secession.⁴

From such evidence it seems fair to conclude that if a constitutional convention had met, Seward would have been morally bound by the logic of his arguments,

¹ *Globe*, 1860-61, 1270.

² McPherson, 78.

³ *4 Works*, 671.

⁴ *Globe*, 1860-61, 1875, 1404, 1405.

⁵ On January 16th, when Clark's resolutions were first brought to a vote, as an amendment to Crittenden's compromise, Seward voted for them. Crittenden's plan was to put his propositions to a popular vote, as a means of indicating to Congress what ought to be done.—*Globe*, 1860-61, 237. Seward said subsequently that he had opposed it because he regarded the method as "unconstitutional and ineffectual."—*4 Works*, 678.

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by his pleas for the Union, and by his pledges for concession, to favor either the Crittenden compromise or one substantially the same except in respect to slavery in territory that might be afterward acquired.

In opposition to the correctness of this conclusion, several pledges to Mrs. Seward might be cited: December 24th, "We have come to no compromise; and we shall not."¹ December 31st, "There is no fear of any compromise of principle or advantage of freedom. If there is such an one, which I do not expect, I shall be no party to it."² January 13, 1861, "I could not compromise a principle, if I would, for there is nobody to go with me."³ It is at least suggestive that his wife continued to suspect that he had turned compromiser.⁴ If he meant to promise that he would favor no proposition that she then, or he himself a few months before, regarded as a compromise, he did not keep his word. When it was reported that Charles Francis Adams was ready to vote for the admission of New Mexico as a slave state, Mrs. Seward wrote to Sumner: "Three hundred thousand square miles of God's earth is a high price for the questionable advantage of a union with the slave states."⁵ In the speech of January 12th, as has been noticed, Seward indicated his willingness to favor a division of all the territory, aside from Kansas, into two states, and admit them without restriction as to slavery, if provision could be made for their subdivision, whenever necessary, into several states.⁶ His belief that this reservation could not be made constitutionally did not affect the principle. The general

¹ 2 Seward, 483.

² *Ibid.*, 489.

³ *Ibid.*, 496.

⁴ When Mrs. Seward objected to his "concessions" in the speech of January 12th, he replied: "You will soon enough come to see that they are not compromises, but explanations to disarm enemies of Truth, Freedom, and Union of their most effective weapons."

—2 Seward, 496-97.

⁵ 4 Pierce, 10.

⁶ 4 *Works*, 667.

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expectation was that by such a plan New Mexico would become a slave state, and the northern territory would be free. Seward's whole argument about slavery in the territories was similar to that of the northern Whig compromisers of 1850, and was entirely inconsistent with what he had been saying for the past twelve years.

But it must always be remembered that Seward's two immediate objects during these months were to foster sympathy between the loyalists of both sections and to prevent a conflict with the Confederates before Lincoln's inauguration, and that these objects were of supreme importance.

No one knew better than he how many unionists in both sections honestly believed that the Republicans designed to initiate a revolutionary policy. There never was a day before the surrender at Appomattox when the Republicans alone could have saved the Union. Because Seward and Weed saw how helpless their party must remain, they aimed to win for it as much confidence and support as possible. "The North is divided," wrote Seward, on January 13th. "Two-thirds of the Republican Senators are as reckless in action as the South. They imagine that the government can go on and conquer the South, while they, themselves, sit still and see the work done."¹ "The Union cannot be saved by proving that secession is illegal or unconstitutional."² The only way in which the North as a whole could be brought to the point of fighting for the preservation of the Union was by making it plain that the Republicans had not provoked the South into secession and that there was still enough loyalty in the border slave states to warrant the expectation of an easy victory over the Confederacy.³

¹ 2 Seward, 496.

² Speech, January 13th, 4 *Works*, 652.

³ See M. H. Grinnell to Seward, Appendix B.

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But the urgent task was to preclude a violent outbreak during Buchanan's term. The constant aim of the secessionist leaders ever since the election had been to destroy all hope of reconciliation, and when they found the unionists in the border slave states exerting unexpected power, they charged them with being the dupes of the Republicans.¹ And Governor Pickens, of South Carolina, suggested to Toombs, on February 12th, that it would be a good plan to bring on a conflict so as to open a gulf between the southern border states and the North.²—

On January 23d Seward wrote home: "Once for all, I must gain time for the new administration to organize and for the frenzy of passion to subside."³ Until the Republicans could command the physical and material strength of the government, any positive offer to compromise would weaken them more than their enemies.⁴

¹ Editorial articles in *Semi-Weekly Richmond Enquirer*, February 19 and 22, 1861, are good illustrations.

² Crawford's *Genesis of the Civil War*, 270.

³ 2 Seward, 497.

⁴ Six years afterward Seward described his purpose at this time as follows:

"In regard to February, 1861, I need only say, that, at the time the secession leaders were all in the Senate and House, with power enough, and only wanting an excuse, to get up a resistance in the capital to the declaration of Mr. Lincoln's election and to his inauguration—in other words, to have an excuse and opportunity to open the civil war here before the new administration and new Congress could be in authority to subdue it—I desired to avoid giving them that advantage. I conferred throughout with General Scott and Mr. Stanton, then in Mr. Buchanan's Cabinet. I presume that I conversed with others in a way that seemed to me best calculated to leave the inauguration of a war to the secessionists, and to delay it, in any case, until the new administration should be in possession of the government. It was less military demonstration that was wanted at that particular moment than political discretion.

"Discretion taught two duties—namely, to awaken patriotism at the North, and to get the secessionists, with Buchanan's administration, out of Washington. Mr. Adams well and thoroughly under-

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There is no reason to doubt that Seward's policy warded off the most imminent dangers and bridged over the chasm between November and March. No one but Buchanan had the power—and he wholly lacked the capacity and the courage—to develop a better and more far-reaching method of dealing with secession. What Seward did was less a deliberate policy than tactics for an emergency, but it was timely and effective for the immediate purpose, and amazingly so when all the difficulties are given due consideration. This was the hour of Seward's supreme greatness.

Seward's self-conscious bearing at this time has been much criticised; and it has been alleged that he imagined himself another Atlas on whose shoulders rested the whole weight of the Union. He assumed, as has been noticed, "a sort of dictatorship for defence"; and he wrote home, January 18, 1861: "It seems to me that if I am absent only three days, this administration, the Congress, and the District, would fall into consternation and despair. I am the only *hopeful, calm, conciliatory* person here."¹ At that time the Senators from Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi were about to withdraw from the Senate, and Georgia was hourly expected to pass her ordinance of secession. One needs

stood me. On the 22d of February, in concert with Mr. Stanton, I caused the United States flag to be displayed throughout the northern and western portions of the United States."—Seward to William Schouler, June 13, 1867. ¹ Schouler's *Massachusetts in the Civil War*, 41, 42.

The *Evening Journal* of February 14, 1861, said that if the peace conference did nothing else, it had shown "that northern states do not regard southern ones as enemies, and by securing what is of the first importance in all this business—time for the excitement to cool, and for the madness of secession to be realized. . . . The only objection that can be raised to either of these [methods of changing the Constitution] is, that it requires time and prevents 'precipitation into revolution.' This is precisely why we commend it."

¹ ² Seward, 497.

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but to read the records of the proceedings in the Senate three or four days later, after these Senators had departed, to see how easily consternation and despair might have prevailed if Seward had not been there to insist with serene assurance on proceeding with the regular business and to oppose entering into an exciting and futile debate, which some of the secessionists tried to stir up. On January 23d he again wrote to Mrs. Seward: "Mad men North, and mad men South, are working together to produce a dissolution of the Union by civil war. The present administration and the incoming one unite in devolving on me the responsibility of averting those disasters. My own party trusts me, but not without reservation. All the other parties, North and South, cast themselves upon me."¹ Great as his egotism appears, it was not out of proportion to his superiority and responsibility at the time. And his intimacy with Lincoln during these months fully warranted the statement about the incoming administration.²

On December 8, 1860, Lincoln began the definite selection of his Cabinet by inviting Seward to be Secretary of State. The newspapers had circulated a rumor to the effect that the offer was to be tendered merely as a compliment, with the expectation that it would be declined. Lincoln informed Seward that the rumor was groundless, and with characteristic frankness made this handsome acknowledgment: "I now offer you the place in the hope that you will accept it, and with the belief that your position in the public eye, your integrity, ability, learning, and great experience, all combine

¹ 2 Seward, 497.

² To no one else did Lincoln write so many important letters during this period (see 1 Lincoln's *Works*, 653 ff.), and Seward seems to have had no extensive correspondence with any one besides Lincoln, excepting Mrs. Seward and Thurlow Weed.

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to render it an appointment pre-eminently fit to be made."¹ No proposition could have been less a surprise to Seward, but he knew the wisdom of asking for time to reflect.² As it was impracticable for Seward and Lincoln to meet at this time, Weed soon went to Springfield. When he returned he brought Lincoln's memorandum suggesting what concessions the Republicans might make, and a request that Seward should write to him about the status in Washington.³ On the 26th of December Seward sent Lincoln an elaborate statement about political affairs, and two days later he formally accepted the proffered secretaryship.⁴ When the acceptance became public, early in January, Lincoln paid Seward this high compliment: "Your selection for the State Department having become public, I am happy to find scarcely any objection to it. I shall have trouble with every other northern Cabinet appointment, so much so that I shall have to defer them as long as possible, to avoid being teased to insanity to make changes."⁵

Seward was anxious to have in the Cabinet one or more southern unionists that had not been identified with the Republican party, and he suggested the names of John A. Gilmer and Kenneth Raynor, of North Carolina, Robert E. Scott and James Barbour, of Virginia, Randall Hunt, of Louisiana, and Meredith P. Gentry, of

¹ 1 Lincoln's *Works*, 657.

² On December 18th he replied to Lincoln: "You will readily believe that, coming to the consideration of so grave a subject all at once, I need a little time to consider whether I possess the qualifications and temper of a minister, and whether it is in such a capacity that my friends would wish that I should act if I am to continue at all in the public service. These questions are, moreover, to be considered in view of a very anomalous condition of public affairs. I wish, indeed, that a conference with you upon them were possible."—3 Nicolay and Hay, 350. The same day he wrote to Weed: "I have now the occasion for consulting you that you have expected."—2 Seward, 481.

³ Seward, 484.

⁴ 2 Seward, 484, 485, 487.

⁵ 1 Lincoln's *Works*, 665.

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Tennessee.¹ When Weed insisted that some of the southern unionists could be trusted, although their states might secede, Lincoln said, "Well, let us have the names of your white crows, such ones as you think fit for the Cabinet."² Seward was expected to consult some of the Southerners named; but no practical arrangement could be made with any of them. Doubtless each was found to be "too exacting for his section," as Seward said was the case with Robert E. Scott.³ Lincoln never had any confidence that the plan was feasible.

Seward's fears lest violence might break out in Washington before the inauguration caused him to recommend that Lincoln appear somewhat earlier than the public would expect.⁴ But Lincoln thought it better to wait until after the result of the electoral count should be announced.⁵ General Scott and Seward had become convinced, after causing three New York detectives to investigate the rumors, that there was a plot to attack Lincoln during his passage through Baltimore. Therefore, Lincoln consented to take an earlier train so as to get through that city before the public heard of his change of plan. Seward met Lincoln at the station in Washington, and during the next few days they were together much of the time. He introduced Lincoln to the President, the members of the Cabinet, and General Scott, and escorted him into each house of Congress.⁶ Lincoln drove and dined with Seward the first day he was in Washington, and on the following day they appeared together at church.⁷ "He is very cordial and kind toward me—simple, natural, and agreeable," Seward wrote home before Lincoln had been in the capital twenty-four hours.

¹ 3 Nicolay and Hay, 362-63.

² 3 Nicolay and Hay, 365.

³ 3 Nicolay and Hay, 363.

⁴ *National Intelligencer*, February 26, 1861.

⁵ 1 Weed, 806.

⁶ 2 Seward, 486, 487.

⁷ 2 Seward, 511.

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What Lincoln had said about deferring Cabinet appointments as long as possible to avoid being teased into insanity to make changes was one of the early illustrations of his foresight. When he arrived in Washington but one other department-chief besides Seward had been positively chosen. This was Edward Bates, the future Attorney-General. Lincoln had almost decided to nominate Chase as Secretary of the Treasury, Caleb B. Smith, of Indiana, as Secretary of the Interior, Gideon Welles, of Connecticut, as Secretary of the Navy, Simon Cameron as Secretary of War, and Montgomery Blair, of Maryland, as Postmaster-General. There was then most doubt about appointing Cameron and Blair. In a general way, the friends of the aspirants finally became associated with either the Seward or the Chase faction. The Seward men expected the new administration to be conducted along the lines of the policy advocated by their idol. Chase's friends counted among their number most of Seward's enemies of 1860 and the radical Republicans, some of whom believed in recognizing secession as a fact, while others favored coercion. There was considerable personal antipathy between the two branches of the party, but the antagonism was essentially legitimate because it grew out of two distinct theories as to future action.

Shortly after the election William Cullen Bryant urged Lincoln to make Chase Secretary of State; and when Seward's selection became known he again praised Chase's qualities, and spoke of "the need of his presence there [in the Cabinet] as a counterpoise to the one who joins to commanding talents a flexible and indulgent temper of mind and unsafe associations."¹ The old hostility to Seward was made sharper, especially in New York, because Seward and Weed had lately prevented

¹ 2 Godwin's *Bryant*, 150.

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the election of Greeley as United States Senator. During the month of February the *Tribune* and the *Evening Post* assailed Seward with unwonted virulence. The criticism became so exasperating that Weed declared that the assailants "were ready to dissolve the Union, destroy the government, and bankrupt and ruin the people to keep Seward out of the Cabinet and secure for themselves and their adherents the 'spoils of office.'"¹ After Lincoln's arrival, Greeley and other Chase men came to Washington to press their opinions with more force. The leaders of the Seward faction were at first less public and direct in their opposition to Chase and the candidates likely to act with him. Seward's prestige and his intimacy with Lincoln were expected to give his friends an advantage, but during the last days of February they became alarmed on finding that Seward's influence over Lincoln was less and Chase's greater than they had supposed. Rumors to the effect that Lincoln had been unable to harmonize the two factions led some of Seward's too zealous supporters into a desperate movement, not merely as a means of excluding Chase, but of making sure that Seward himself should be retained.²

¹ *Evening Journal*, February 25, 1861.

² "It [the Republican party] seems to care a great deal more about getting Seward out of the Cabinet than anything else just now. Lincoln is a 'Simple Susan,' and the men who fought a week at Chicago to nominate him have probably got their labor for their pains. But no matter—Seward is a necessity; Chase or Banks ought to be, and really are, if the machine is to run its four years; but let the New-Yorker with his Illinois attachment have a fair trial."—Bowles to H. L. Dawes, February 26, 1861. 1 Merriam's *Bowles*, 818.

"Later on in the evening — came over and sat by me to urge me to go with him to-morrow to see Mr. Lincoln in regard to the Cabinet appointments. He was much agitated and concerned about them, having gotten [it] into his head, for reasons which he gave me, that Mr. Lincoln, in his despair of harmonizing the Seward men with the Chase men, has concocted or had concocted for him a plan of putting Corwin into the State Department, sending Seward to Eng-

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Lincoln seemed determined to have Montgomery Blair, a resolute coercionist, nominated in place of Henry Winter Davis, a protégé of Weed and Seward. This made it all the more urgent that Seward should either surrender his expectations of controlling the policy of the administration, or else force Lincoln to give up Chase. A party of Seward's friends ventured, on March 2d, to inform the President-elect that Seward could not serve in the Cabinet with Chase.¹ On the same

land, and giving the Treasury to New York. . . . He showed me a letter he had received a fortnight ago from Mr. Draper, in New York, expressing great anxiety as to Mr. Seward's position in the Cabinet in case of the nomination of Mr. Chase, and intimating an intention of visiting Washington with several other gentlemen for the purpose of making Mr. Lincoln understand that he must absolutely drop the idea of putting Mr. Chase into the Treasury. I told him that Mr. Weed had to-day expressed the same ideas to me, and I asked him if he did not know that a counter-pressure was putting on Mr. Lincoln to exclude Mr. Seward. 'Suppose,' I said, 'they should both be excluded?'—"Diary of a Public Man," entry of February 26, 1861; 129 *North American Review*, 262, 263.

The fact that the authorship of this "Diary" has been kept a profound secret might seem to exclude it from the field of trustworthy evidence; but its tone, accuracy, and scope indicate that it was written by a man influential in public affairs and an intimate friend of Seward.

¹ Lamon's *Recollections*, 49-51. "Mr. Lincoln makes his own Cabinet. There can be no doubt about it any longer. This man from Illinois is not in the hands of Mr. Seward. Heaven grant that he may not be in other hands—not to be thought of with patience! These New York men have done just what they have been saying they would do, and with just the result which I have from the first expected; though I own there are points in the upshot which puzzle me. I cannot feel even sure now that Mr. Seward will be nominated at all on Tuesday; and certainly he neither is nor after this can be the real head of the administration, even if his name is on the list of the Cabinet. Such folly on the part of those who assume to be the especial friends of the one man in whose ability and moderation the conservative people of the North have most confidence; and such folly at this moment might almost make one despair of the republic!" The diarist then gives a long and interesting account of the report of one of Seward's friends who was in the party of politicians that had just

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day Seward asked permission of Lincoln to withdraw his acceptance of the secretaryship. Seward's belief was that he alone could safely direct the next administration, and therefore there must be at least a majority of the Cabinet in sympathy with his ideas. Lincoln had given Seward first place as a counsellor, but he had no intention of allowing the great New-Yorker to dictate to him. It was about this time that he indicated his impatience of the attitude of the Seward-champions, by remarking that if the "slate" should break again, it would "break at the top"; that is, Seward would be left off it.¹ But his sober second thought told him that the hostility between Seward's followers and those of Chase would be less harmful if their chiefs were in the Cabinet; and, furthermore, the only way to control Seward—to prevent him from taking the first trick, as Lincoln expressed it²—was to insist on his becoming Secretary of State. So on the morning before the inauguration Lincoln wrote to him: "It is the subject of the most painful solicitude with me; and I feel constrained to beg that you will countermand the withdrawal. The public interest, I think, demands that you should; and my personal feelings are deeply enlisted in the same direction."³ That afternoon Seward had a long conference with the new President, and on the following day the letter of March 2d was formally withdrawn. The

called on Lincoln "to bring matters to a head, and prevent the nomination of Chase at all hazards." They practically told Lincoln that Seward would not sit in the same Cabinet with Chase. Lincoln seemed much distressed by the prospect. Finally, he filled his callers with consternation by asking them how it would do to give the Treasury to Mr. Chase, the State Department to William L. Dayton, and let Seward go as Minister to England!—"Diary," etc., entry of March 2, 1861, 129 *North American Review*, 271-73. See also Welles's *Lincoln and Seward*, 86.

² 3 Nicolay and Hay, 371.

¹ 3 Nicolay and Hay, 370.

³ 3 Nicolay and Hay, 371.



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incident was closed. But Seward seemed not to realize the significance of what had taken place, for a letter written a few days later contained these sentences:

“The President is determined that he will have a compound Cabinet, and that it shall be peaceful, and even permanent. I was at one time on the point of refusing—nay, I did refuse, for a time, to hazard myself in the experiment. But a distracted country appeared before me, and I withdrew from that position. I believe I can endure as much as any one; and may be I can endure enough to make the experiment successful. At all events, I did not dare to go home, or to England, and leave the country to chance.”¹

¹ 2 Seward, 518.

CHAPTER XXVI

SEWARD'S OPINIONS ON THE TARIFF, PUBLIC LANDS, INTERNAL IMPROVEMENTS, SUBSIDIES, COMMERCE, ETC.

SEWARD's prominence in antislavery politics and in diplomacy has caused his opinions on other questions to be overlooked. In mental qualities, education, and experience he ranked high among the Senators best fitted for the serious business of legislation.

His career in New York had indicated that he was a staunch federalist and protectionist. He believed that one of the chief functions of government was directly to stimulate national development by legislation. The principal support of such a system must be a high tariff, for in no other way can the necessary revenues be obtained. He maintained that where there were many resources, but where industry was applied to only a few staples, three great interests were neglected: natural resources were unimproved; labor was unemployed; and internal exchanges, which a diversity of industry would render necessary, were undeveloped. He held that foreign commerce, based on a narrow system of production, compelled a nation to sell its staples at prices reduced by competition in foreign markets, and to buy fabrics at prices established by monopoly in the same markets. The application of industry to a large number of objects rested upon these "impregnable grounds, viz.: first, that the use of indigenous materials does not diminish, but on the contrary increases, the public wealth; second, that society is constituted so that individuals

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voluntarily classify themselves in all, and not in a few, departments of industry, by reason of a distributive congeniality of tastes and adaptation of powers; and that while labor so distributed is more profitable, the general contentment and independence of the people are secured and preserved, and their enterprise is stimulated and sustained.”¹ He held that it ought not to be less profitable to supply ourselves from our own resources with copper, iron, glass, and paper than with flour, sugar, and gold. If mining and manufacturing were profitable in England, they could be made so here. To the objection that labor was cheaper in that country, he replied: “Yes, because you leave it there. If you offer inducements, it will come here just as freely as agricultural labor now comes. The ocean is reduced to a ferry.” In his opinion the theory that the encouragement given to the industry of one class of citizens is partial, and is injurious to that of other classes, could not in any just sense be true, “since the prosperity and vigor of each class depend in a great degree on the prosperity and vigor of all the industrial classes. But all experience shows that if government do not favor domestic enterprise, its negative policy will benefit some foreign monopoly, which, of all classes of legislation, is most injurious and least excusable.”²

In 1853, when one of the appropriation bills was under consideration, Mason, of Virginia, offered an amendment to repeal the duty on iron imported for rails to be laid upon railroads in the United States. Douglas desired to have the duty abolished for three years.³ Hale estimated, without being contradicted, that only about one-tenth of the railroad iron used in the United States was manufactured in this country;

¹ 4 *Works*, 154, 155.

² 4 *Works*, 156, 157.

³ *Globe*, 1852-53, 906.

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that a duty of three million seven hundred thousand dollars would be paid in order to benefit our few furnaces one-tenth of that amount; and, therefore, that railroad building was taxed nearly four million dollars, merely in their interest.¹

Seward defined his position with startling frankness: "Sir, I have voted land by the square league across the continent, and twenty millions of dollars out of the public treasury for railroads. I will not vote one dollar out of the iron mines of my country, at the cost of the owner, and of the miner who is engaged in drawing its wealth to the surface."² This seemed somewhat inconsistent, but it was not so for a sincere protectionist. Seward fully understood the practical importance of all protectionists standing together:

"We know that it [protection] requires the co-operation, the concerted action of all the industrial classes, and of capitalists of every description, to adjust and render equal, to procure the establishment of a system of imposts, with any view whatever, direct or indirect, to the protection and encouragement of American industry." . . .

"Mr. President, the whole manufacturing interest of the country is in danger; and it is in danger because we, who are its friends, are demoralized and divided." . . . "In the very next session of Congress they will come with arguments equally insidious, and equally forcible, and then the manufacturers of Lowell may look to the safety of their spindles, and the sugar and the cotton-growers of the South may look to the safety of their sugar and their cotton-fields; and the wheat-grower of Maryland, and the corn-grower of Ohio and Illinois, may look to the safety of their special interests."³

Of free-trade he said:

"I can understand the proposition of *free-trade*. It is an intelligible theory, and at some future period down the vista of years, it is probable that the world will come to understand that universal *free-trade* is the wisest and most

¹ *Globe*, 1852-58, 910.

² *3 Works*, 667.

³ *3 Works*, 633.

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beneficent system of fiscal administration for any government and for all governments; and so far as that forms the principle on which this measure proceeds, I hail the introduction of it here. But free-trade involves not one only but two principles, not only absence of imports, but direct taxation to support the government. I call, then, upon those who support this measure of free-trade to defend it upon that principle—to carry it out on that principle, by bringing in a bill for direct taxation to an extent which will replace revenues surrendered.”¹

However, Seward in 1854 voted for the reciprocity treaty with Canada, which was a liberal measure.²

The exigencies that compelled the revision of the tariff in 1857 were not such as to bring into bold contrast the principles of protection and free-trade. The tariff of 1846 had so encouraged importations that there was a surplus of about twenty millions of dollars in gold in the treasury. This growing surplus both invited extravagant appropriations and seriously lessened the volume of currency in circulation. The first aim, therefore, was to reduce the revenue. Two means were proposed. The House bill was designed to decrease the income of the government chiefly by transferring to the free list articles not produced here or that were necessary to our manufactures. This left the tariff on articles coming into competition with American products; and to that extent it recognized the principle of protection. The Senate amendment proposed what is popularly called a horizontal reduction on most articles and a free entry for those demanded only by manufacturers. This, it was held, would preserve and extend the free-trade principle.³ Seward naturally preferred the House bill, for he was opposed to reducing the duty on raw materials produced here, such as iron and wool.

¹ 8 *Works*, 659.

² 4 *Works*, 80.

³ *Globe*, 1856-57, Apdx., 328 ff.

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"I think," he said, "the reduction of the revenue is in itself subordinate in importance to the stability of the industry of the country. The inconvenience of having too full a treasury is only a consequence of the greater public inconvenience of importing from other countries many things which ought to be produced at home. I, therefore, want a measure which, while it effects a reduction of the revenue, will be sure also to reduce imports."¹

Principally as a result of the financial crisis of 1857, the tariff law enacted that year had not yielded a sufficient revenue. The Morrill tariff of 1861 was designed to supply the deficit. Under the tariffs of 1846 and 1857 there was a liberal warehouse system, so that imported goods might lie in bond a considerable time before the payment of duty. The House bill proposed to reduce this period to so short a time as practically to do away with the credit feature. The Senate committee desired to increase the time from thirty to ninety days. Seward wished to make it three years.² The inland protectionists, like Simon Cameron, naturally looked upon such a plan as protection for importers and foreign manufacturers and as the withholding from the United States treasury of many millions.³ Seward's constituency in New York city and his experience on the committee on commerce had kept him free from the common prejudices against international exchanges where they did not directly conflict with important domestic interests. This was the only point in the debate that he defended with persistency and special skill. He and his colleague, Preston King, and Sumner voted against their Republican associates, and the Senate approved Seward's amendment. He also made an effort—but an unsuccessful one—to reduce the tariff on books and printed literature from fifteen to ten per cent., urging

¹ *Globe*, 1856-57, Apdx., 345.

² *Globe*, 1860-61, 948.

³ *Globe*, 1860-61, 930.

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that that would be "quite enough to levy on knowledge and literature."¹

Nearly three-fourths of the four million square miles of national area had been in the possession of the Federal government, subject to the control and disposal of Congress. The public lands were so vast that for more than half a century our legislators seemed to believe that the supply could never be exhausted. They were sold at nominal prices, distributed as bounties for military service, and donated to the new states by the hundred thousand acres for purposes of internal improvement, education, and charity.² The westward flow of the population was greatly accelerated by the discovery of gold in California and by the acquisitions from Mexico. The schemes for obtaining public land soon became countless. West of the Ohio river many persons believed that every one that wanted land should be given it for the asking, and the new states set up a clamor against the Federal government retaining control over lands within their borders. The revenue from the sale of the public lands was not needed by the United States treasury, but a majority in Congress could not be obtained for its distribution among the states. However, many of the Democrats agreed with the Whigs that the Constitution gave Congress absolute control over the public domain. The popular demand for a spendthrift policy of distribution, and the political advantages to be gained by the advocates of such a policy, soon became too great to be resisted. As late as 1850 Seward estimated that there still remained seventeen hundred million acres of the public domain.³ No wonder that the most sober legislators and the most clever politicians were overflowing with opinions on the great land question.⁴

¹ *Globe*, 1860-61, 987.

² *Globe*, 1850-51, 742.

³ *1 Works*, 298.

⁴ In 1851, Dawson, of Georgia, told the Senate, that the public lands

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Seward's theories about the functions of the Federal government indicated that he would be hampered by no constitutional objections. Months before the Hungarian revolution had failed, thousands of the spirited Magyars had come to the United States to seek a home. On January 9, 1850, Seward presented to the Senate a resolution denouncing the "injustice, barbarity, and oppression" which Austria and Russia had practised toward Hungary, and requesting the committee on public lands "to inquire and report on the propriety of setting apart a portion of the public domain, to be granted, free from all charges, to the exiles of Hungary already arrived, and hereafter to arrive, in the United States, as well as to the exiles fleeing from oppression in other European countries."¹ Subsequently Foote, of Mississippi, characterized the different propositions before the Senate for the disposition of public land as "bids" for popularity; and the way in which Senators laughed and joked about the remark indicated that others held similar opinions.² Douglas charged Seward with giving the foreign-born resident an advantage over the native American; and Dawson, of Georgia, called Seward's plan "constituting our public domain into a great national charity fund."³ Seward practically admitted Dawson's charge, and replied to Douglas by saying that he would gladly vote for any other proposition placing the immigrant and the native on an equal footing. He suggested that if the foreigner was given a preference it was because his "liberties had been cloven

were "made a mere battledoor for political purposes; and any man who has any aspirations to the highest office in the gift of the people of this country makes it his business to form his platforms upon the public lands, and the rights and interests of the states are made subservient to the personal aspirations of individuals." . . . "This is true, and should be known; and I am prepared to tell it boldly."—*Globe*, 1850-51, 743.

² *Globe*, 1849-50, 262, 263.

¹ *Globe*, 1849-50, 128.

³ *Globe*, 1849-50, 264.

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down," because he had been deprived of his home, and had sought this land of liberty as an asylum.¹ Moreover, he was so friendly toward immigrants that he was in favor of receiving all classes, and would support "an amelioration of the laws of naturalization, so as to give a vote to any man of any country on his becoming permanently domiciled among us."²

In September, 1850, he favored a bill for surveying Oregon and making donations of the public lands to settlers. He desired that immigrants that had declared their intentions to become citizens should have the same privileges as native Americans.³ A few days later, when the Senate was considering a measure to grant citizens certain mining privileges on the public lands in California, he moved to amend it so as to include immigrants, as in the bill relating to Oregon.⁴ Dawson protested that this would throw open the gold mines to the whole world;⁵ and both of the California Senators, Frémont and Gwin, feared that the passage of such an amendment would cause their state to be overrun by the half-civilized Mexicans, while Gwin believed that many Mexicans would bring their peons with them.⁶ Seward considered that "distinctions between races and castes are vices in any constitution of government," and he ventured the prophecy "that if we now refuse to discriminate in California in favor of those who are already citizens and those who are in the process of becoming so, we shall happily crush in the bud that principle of Native-Americanism which, if allowed to ripen, would

¹ *Globe*, 1849-50, 284.

² *Ibid.*, 267. This phrase was changed so that in his *Works* it reads: "The melloration of the laws of naturalization, which put a period of five years and an oath in the way of any man of any country in becoming a citizen, which raises a barrier between ourselves and those who cast their lot amongst us."—1 *Works*, 295.

³ 1 *Works*, 322, 323.

⁵ *Globe*, 1849-50, Apdx., 1865.

⁴ 1 *Works*, 323-27.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1866, 1867.

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there, as elsewhere, produce only bitter fruits.”¹ He could see no difference between the giving of farming privileges and the granting of mining concessions to immigrants. “The policy is the same in both cases ; it is to cover the earth with population as fast as possible, and to distribute the wealth acquired as broadly as possible.” He advocated the measure because he “regarded the interests of the whole American family as demanding the practice of not only the largest civil liberty, but also the opening of the door to the privileges of citizenship widely and freely to all who may desire to enter.” Foote, in another of his personal outbursts, charged that Seward could have advocated such doctrines only “for the purpose of bolstering up the tottering pretensions to presidential advancement.”²

The objection to Spanish-Americans was so strong that Senator Dodge, of Iowa, offered a further amendment conferring the proposed privileges on immigrants from Europe only.³ This, it should be noticed, excluded those from Canada and all other parts of this continent, from Australia and other sections of the globe inhabited by European races. But few save Europeans had become citizens—and voters. Seward supported Dodge’s amendment, without making any explanations.⁴

In February, 1851, a bill proposing to release to Louisiana all the public lands within her borders, to enable her to improve the navigation of the Mississippi, was under consideration. Seward favored it, and in a carefully prepared speech explained his theories as to the best way to deal with the public domain in general.⁵ The strongest objections to the gratuitous distribution of the lands or their relinquishment to the states in which they lay, were that they had cost the nation millions of

¹ *1 Works*, 824.

² *Ibid.*, 1867..

³ *Globe*, 1849-50, Apdx., 1866.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *1 Works*, 156-71.

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dollars, and that they were a proper and important source of revenue. In order to overcome these objections, Seward urged such considerations as these: that "the property *given* would remain with the *giver* after the gift, and would be enhanced in usefulness by the gift"; that, if against all the cost of the public lands we put "all the national benefits—financial, commercial, and political—which have been secured, the domain would be discharged from all indebtedness whatever to the treasury"; that the value of the public land "is what it is worth now, not what it cost." Because the government had disposed of so many million acres in recent years, which were still unoccupied and in the market, it was estimated that it would be from eight to sixteen years before the public lands would again be a source of any considerable profit. "The domain no longer yields, nor will ever again yield, a revenue."¹ He further maintained that we had only a temporary jurisdiction and a temporary estate in the public lands; that the reversion belonged to the states; and that until that reversion had taken place, the domain would not begin to contribute to the wealth and strength of the whole republic.²

He overlooked the facts that the lands could only be made valuable by actual settlement; that whether owned by the states or the nation the demand for them by settlers would not be greatly affected, for the tendencies and numbers of the population would not be specially influenced; that if the states made gratuitous grants, then there would be no revenues from them with which to "construct channels of trade and to found systems of education," of which Seward was dreaming;³ that if the states should realize small or great returns from them at any time—and Seward expected the latter—then it must be because

¹ 1 *Works*, 164-66.

² 1 *Works*, 168.

³ *Ibid.*, 169.

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the lands, which the government was urged to surrender as worthless, had value. Furthermore, Seward was mistaken as to his estimate of future revenue. As a fact, for the next eight years the public lands yielded over forty-one million dollars.¹

From his experiences in connection with the land company in New York, he had gained valuable knowledge about the importance of small possessions of land by individuals, and the keeping of the homestead free from seizure by creditors. His influence in these respects was thoroughly good. But in regard to the disposal of the national estate his reasoning was often unsound. He seemed to be infatuated with the notion that the public lands should be got rid of in the shortest possible time. His manner and restless activity remind one of a bustling land-agent rather than of a sober and far-seeing statesman, who remembers that there are to be future generations and increased millions to be cared for in other centuries. At first he favored the appropriation of the revenues from the sale of the public lands to the use of the states. Then he unsuccessfully attempted to have the lands within the states given to them outright. So the nearest he could come to realizing his wishes was to favor every measure asking for public lands for any purpose that claimed to be connected with internal improvements, education, or charity. It should not be inferred that these ideas were peculiar to Seward. Many others were influenced by the current of popular opinion; but his federalistic principles, his ambition, and his prominence in his party compelled him to be first and most extreme in this field as in others, or to forego the popularity to be won.

There was one important advantage to be gained by the speedy settlement of as much as possible of the pub-

¹ 3 Lalor's *Cyclopædia*, 478.

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lic domain—most of which had a climate unfavorable to slavery—and that was the development of the power of the North, which would make disunion more and more difficult. Seward and the southern leaders foresaw this, and it had considerable influence upon their respective actions. He would have been glad, as has been noticed, to use the public lands to pay for “the gradual but certain removal of slavery, by a scheme of compensating emancipation.”¹ But there was no public sentiment favorable to such a suggestion.

Seward's opinions regarding internal improvements resembled those on the tariff and the public lands. The plan of making moderate grants of lands to the states for the purposes of highways and canals was departed from in 1850. In that year Douglas, although theoretically a strict constructionist, pushed through Congress a bill ceding to the states of Illinois, Mississippi, and Alabama about two and a half million acres of land for the purpose of building the Illinois Central and the Mobile and Ohio railroads.² The measure received Seward's enthusiastic support.³ He saw no constitutional objections to the construction of roads of any kind that would serve for great national objects. As a country had need of great highways and canals before private capital could build them, and as the new states, unlike the old, did not possess the resource of public lands,

“the government owes it to itself, and to the states, to make liberal, and at the same time judicious, appropriations, to extend its net-work of railroads and canals over these new regions, where the people and the government are unable to construct the work themselves. And, if there were any apparent fallacy in this argument, I think I should nevertheless be convinced of its soundness by the

¹ 1 *Works*, 167.

² *Globe*, 1849-50, 844-45; Cutts's *Douglas*, 187-99; 2 Lalor's *Cyclopedia*, 572.

³ 1 *Works*, 302-307.

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fact that all the new states which have undertaken to construct these necessary thoroughfares—necessary not only for themselves but for the whole country; necessary for the welfare and prosperity and even for the existence of the Union—have all found themselves embarrassed and crippled, and many of them rendered bankrupt, by the attempt to accomplish objects which they were unable to accomplish, and which the Federal government had ample power to carry into effect.”¹

From this time forward bills of similar character, but not calling for such enormous amounts, became very numerous. In 1854, when many of them were before the Senate, Seward said: “I have always voted for every one of these bills, though I have no personal interest in them.”²

In his political career there was no public project that he cherished so persistently as that of building, with the assistance of the Federal government, a railroad to the Pacific ocean. During the first year of his senatorship he promised to aid it,³ and nearly twelve years later he said that it had been “the first, chiefest, and best of all the measures” he could support while remaining in the public service.⁴ From the beginning of 1854 he was a member of the special committee on a Pacific railroad, and he was the ablest and most strenuous advocate of whatever measure seemed likely to win a majority in Congress. Many members in each house had “constitutional” objections to giving governmental support to a project unless they could be assured that the road would be so located as to be a special benefit to their respective states. A majority could not be obtained for one road, but it seemed likely that a bill providing for three, in different localities, might be passed. A large number of Congressmen were willing

¹ 1 *Works*, 305.

² 8 *Works*, 424, 425.

³ *Globe*, 1853-54, 409.

⁴ *Globe*, 1860-61, 250.

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to vote for the necessary appropriations, but they were opposed to making the railroad a governmental enterprise.

It was decidedly to Seward's credit that he looked with disfavor upon the lavish and probably impossible "log-rolling" scheme of constructing three railroads to the Pacific. At the same time he admitted: "It is the very extraordinary extension of that [the railroad] system, indeed, which has, to a great extent, produced the present depression in the country."¹ While he thought the building of a Pacific railroad so urgent as to make the adoption of any special plan secondary in importance, he had very clear ideas about the advantages of a northern route "in continuation of the northwestern track of the emigration which has been pursued from the time when the navigation of the great lakes was opened." . . . "I would directly employ the capital and credit of the United States, increasing the revenues of the United States from commerce for the purpose of defraying the cost, and establishing, at the same time, a sinking fund which should, within a reasonable period, absorb the public debt thus created. And I would surrender the public lands in the vicinity of the road to actual settlers for cultivation, so as to secure the speediest possible production of revenue from it."²

Believing a Pacific railroad to be essential to the safety of the Union, the matter of appropriating fifty or a hundred million dollars, or of pledging ten millions a year for maintaining the system, seemed to him to be comparatively insignificant. "It is necessary; and, since it is necessary, there is an end of the argument." In his opinion it had the same claims upon the United States treasury as the postal system and the main-

¹ *Globe*, 1854-55, 750.

² *Globe*, 1858-59, 157.

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tenance of the army and the navy; and if it could not otherwise be built, there should be retrenchment in these departments.¹

Year after year he begged Senators to stop quibbling and to come to a vote. He repeatedly urged that it was folly to think of a foreign war or to negotiate treaties for routes across Central America until we had done what was possible to make one people of the inhabitants of the East and of the West. In the winter of 1858-59, when there were many indications that the Democrats were in search of a foreign war as the best way to retrieve the fortunes of their party, Seward pleaded for his enterprise as "a peaceful direction of the activity of the nation. Peaceful activity is safer; it is cheaper; it is surer; it saves all the elements of national strength and national power, and increases them." Again, in January, 1861, when the Union was about to be rent in twain, he begged the Senate to appropriate ninety-six million dollars for the building of a northern and a southern railway to the Pacific, insisting that the measure was one "of conciliation, of pacification, of compromise, and of union."² A few days later, after several southern Senators had made their valedictories, he tried to lay aside the disputed question as to their resignations, so that he might bring the Pacific railroad bill to a vote.⁴ Although Congress did not settle upon a plan until a year after Seward had become Secretary of State, he lived to see the completion of the leading features of the great enterprise.

Long before 1850 the custom of making appropria-

¹ *Globe*, 1858-59, 158. In his zeal he called it "the realization of what all Europe has been striving for for the last four hundred years," for it made practical the expectations of a discovery of a western passage from Europe to the shores of Cathay.—*Globe*, 1857-58, 1585.

² *Globe*, 1858-59, 159.

³ *Globe*, 1860-61, 250.

⁴ *Globe*, 1860-61, 505.

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tions for the improvement of the navigation of rivers and harbors had become well established. Many of the strict constructionists still believed that the Constitution had not given Congress the right to make such improvements within the states; but as in the case of land appropriations for railroads, Democratic Congressmen of any state to be especially benefited were generally ready to vote with the Whigs or the Republicans. Seward was so confident that Congress had this power that he seems never to have considered it worth while to undertake its defence. A careful search of the *Globe* during the years when he was Senator has not revealed any evidence that he ever objected to any item in any river and harbor bill, even where there was a large appropriation for deepening some little river, creek, or cove, as was often the case. He frequently had the management of these bills when before the Senate, and he pursued almost the same policy as in his efforts to promote the distribution of the public lands. He favored granting the utmost that anybody would propose, but he would accept what could be obtained: "I prefer internal improvements somehow to internal improvements nohow; I prefer internal improvements any way to a defeat and subversion of the system."¹

The self-confidence resulting from the rapid growth of population and riches had inspired the United States with a desire to rival the greatest of maritime nations. England began to subsidize the Cunard steamers as early as 1839. Two years later, Thomas Butler King, of Georgia, urged that the United States should adopt a like system. In 1847 a line of steamers, aided by our national treasury, began to ply between New York and Bremen. Shortly afterward provision was made for

¹ *Globe*, 1854-55, 661.

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other lines. Edward K. Collins agreed to build five fast ships, suitable for use by the government in time of war, which should make twenty round trips per annum between New York and Liverpool, and carry the United States mail for three hundred and eighty-five thousand dollars a year for ten years. In 1852 the United States wanted the number of trips increased to twenty-six, but the Collins company claimed to have suffered great losses, and it demanded that the subsidy should be increased to eight hundred and fifty-eight thousand dollars.

R. M. T. Hunter, of Virginia, who was chairman of the Senate committee on finance, led the opposition, urging that we were trying to rival England by subsidizing these steamers from the United States treasury; that the plan rested upon the same basis as the protection of iron factories; that it was injurious to all other lines carrying freight and passengers, and that the ships would not be suitable for use in time of war.¹

Seward became deeply interested in the enterprise. On April 27, 1852, he defended it in one of his carefully prepared speeches.² He maintained that it was necessary to break the English monopoly of carrying the mails; that it was essential to our national greatness, and would be invaluable in case of war; that the increase in postage accruing promised to defray the expense in the near future; that a few more years were necessary to decide whether steam navigation would be self-sustaining; that to surrender it at this time would be nothing less than to yield "the proud commercial and political position we have gained by two wars with Great Britain" and to take "the position of Mexico, of the Canadas, and of the South American states." He had a vision of the world embraced in a single "great commercial system, ramified by a thousand nerves pro-

¹ *Globe*, 1851-52, 1148-49.

² 1 *Works*, 222-35.

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jecting from the one head at London. Yet, stupendous as the scheme is, our own merchants, conscious of equal capacity and equal resources, and relying on experience for success, stand here beseeching us to allow them to counteract its fulfilment, and ask of us facilities and aid equal to those yielded by the British government to its citizens."¹ He concluded with an eloquent tribute to America's mechanical genius, and expressed the belief that, considering our superior resources in soil and in the influence of freedom, our "enterprise will be adequate to the glorious conflict, if it shall be sustained by constancy and perseverance on the part of their government."

The subject fired Seward's imagination, so that he made one of the most eloquent speeches of his life. No other argument in the debate was so finished and inspiring. The *Tribune* printed it in full and praised it editorially.² Writing to Seward about it, Greeley said: "Dana, who has been correcting the manuscript for the press, says it is *the* speech of the session."³

While the proposition for increasing the subsidy was under consideration, the *Baltic*, one of the best of the Collins steamers, came to Washington. Seward moved that the Senate should adjourn over one day so as to accept the invitation of the company to inspect the vessel. Several members thought they scented corruption, and strenuously objected to the proposition, but Seward carried his point.⁴ The various influences at work were so strong that Congress voted the desired subsidy of eight hundred and fifty-eight thousand dollars per annum, reserving the right to cut off the increase after giving six months' notice any time after the end of 1854.

¹ 1 *Works*, 283, 284.

² *Tribune*, April 28, 1852.

³ Letter of April 27, 1852. Seward MSS. This showed that Seward had furnished the *Tribune* a copy of the speech in advance.

⁴ *Globe*, 1851-52, 657-59.

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For several years there was the keenest rivalry in speed between the Collins (American) and Cunard (British) lines. It was an international race which the people on each side watched with patriotic interest. In the autumn of 1854, the *Arctic*, of the Collins line, collided with a vessel in a fog, and over three hundred of those on board went down. The disaster was felt like a national calamity. Nevertheless, in 1855, Congress again voted the appropriation and tried to deprive itself of the power to discontinue the increased subsidy. President Pierce vetoed the bill. The *Tribune* praised him ardently for his bold stand "against the overwhelming surges of venality that broke over a debauched Congress."¹ Congress endeavored to pass the bill over the veto, but it was able only to continue the existing arrangement.²

In the debate of 1855 Seward showed that his enthusiasm had grown rather than lessened. Instead of seeing the evils of such special legislation, he complained because the contract had not been made absolute and unchangeable for a number of years.³ To the complaint that it was "an extravagant and luxurious line,"

¹ The article was entitled "Thou Shalt Not Steal," and seems to have been entirely non-partisan. See Pike's *First Blows, etc.*, 279-82.

² 8 Rhodes, 11, 12.

³ "Sir, it is our misfortune that we have made an unnecessary stipulation, and reserve in our hands a power, in consequence of which every opponent of this scheme about the purlieus of the Capitol, in the city of New York, through the whole Union, all competitors, all enemies, all haters of Collins and his prosperity, will come here and combine together to urge Congress to discontinue the contract that their own private ends may be attained. Such as this is the spectacle which we see before us. Here are your Vanderbilts and others, rivals or enemies of the Collins line, who are pressing upon Congress to exercise this power of annulling the contract, in order that they may have the benefit of it; and when the proprietors of the line come forward in great alarm and peril to defend their rights, they are told that their solicitations impair the dignity and taint the atmosphere of Congress."—*Globe*, 1854-55, Apdx., 801.

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he replied by saying that in his judgment it was "the proper diplomatic representative of the United States to the Old World." He pledged it his support, "now, and always, with every contribution which is necessary." His ambition for such enterprises was boundless, and he added: "I shall endeavor to extend similar lines of communication across the Pacific, until we shall have encircled the world with the couriers of intelligence and the instructions of civil and religious liberty."¹ Many objected that this plan created a monopoly and discouraged the development of a steam marine. Seward's answer showed what an infatuation had taken possession of him:

"Sir, it is the way, and the only way, in which you can bring a steam marine into existence. It is thirty years since Dr. Lardner predicted that steam would never be a self-sustaining agent upon the ocean. When the first steamer crossed from Bristol to New York, the world derided the short-sightedness of the great philosopher. But, sir, what is the fact? Thirty years have elapsed, and, although steam is so necessary and useful an agent, it is not yet self-sustaining as a navigating power across the Atlantic, nor across any other ocean; and you have your choice either by the government to aid and sustain steam lines, or do without them altogether. It is true, the time will come when it will not be necessary to render this aid; but until that time shall come it is most wise, and just, and prudent to sustain it in this way."²

Many believed that the subsidy was extravagant, especially as Vanderbilt offered to perform the same service for about half the amount.³ Early in 1856 a second Collins steamer, the *Pacific* was wrecked, and all on board were lost. A few months later Congress ordered the discontinuance of the extra compensation. About the same time Seward wrote home: "Collins's steamers

¹ *Globe*, 1854-55, Apdx., 301.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Globe*, 1854-55, Apdx., 289.

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have been ruined by Vanderbilt's rivalry; and Vanderbilt himself is even worse off."¹ Collins soon went into bankruptcy, and this grand scheme came to a sad end.

Cyrus W. Field became convinced that a telegraphic cable could be made and operated so as to connect Newfoundland and Ireland; and before the end of 1856 he obtained the assistance of Great Britain, for the hazard and expense of the experiment were too great for private capital. Then he visited Washington to enlist the support of Congress. Early in 1857 Seward introduced a bill providing for governmental aid in the form of a small subsidy.² The object was just the one to call forth his best efforts. He defended the proposition and watched its interests in each house. Before the session ended, the desired support of the government was secured. Within about a year the great enterprise was brought to a successful completion. Nearly everywhere Americans expressed their joy and pride in such demonstrations as would not be expected to follow any occurrence less important than a national victory. The citizens of Auburn, always alert and appreciative of the significance of passing events, flocked about Seward, and demanded that he should give utterance to their enthusiasm. He had a right to feel and express deep satisfaction on account of the part he had taken in helping forward the great undertaking.³

In a speech of July 29, 1852, on the "Survey of the Arctic and Pacific Oceans," Seward set forth his opinions as to the duty of the nation to maritime interests and as to the functions of commerce in bringing the Orient and the Occident into closer relations.⁴ He had

¹ 2 Seward, 287.

² 2 Seward, 348, 349.

³ *Globe*, 1856-57, 253, 395.

⁴ 1 *Works*, 236-53.

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reported from the committee on commerce a bill the purpose of which was to cause an exploration and the making of charts of those parts of the Pacific and Arctic oceans traversed by our vessels engaged in whaling or in commerce with China and Japan. The work was to be done by the Navy Department, and one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars was to be appropriated for this service.¹

One would have to search long before finding as interesting a summary of the whaling industry as Seward gave in a few paragraphs. He was proud of the supremacy of American whale-fishermen, for between 1750 and 1824 England paid her whalers fifteen million dollars in subsidies. He showed that the most profitable, but at the same time most dangerous, fishing-grounds were in the neighborhood of Behring Straits, where a large part of the exploration was to be made. With the practical sense of a business man, he asked: "Sir, have you looked recently at the China trade? It reaches already seven millions in value annually. Have you watched the California trade? Its export of bullion alone exceeds fifty millions of dollars annually, and as yet the mineral development of that state has only begun. The settlement of the Pacific coast is in a state of sheer infancy." But back of the great past and the wonderful present, and above the promises of the future, he thought he saw a higher purpose, a special mission for our people:

"Even the discovery of this continent and its islands, and the organization of society and government upon them, grand and important as these events have been, were but conditional, preliminary, and ancillary to the more sublime result now in the act of consummation—the reunion of the two civilizations, which, having parted on the plains of Asia four thousand years ago, and having travelled ever

¹ *Globe*, 1851-52, 1985, 2041.

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afterward in opposite directions around the world, now meet again on the coasts and islands of the Pacific Ocean. . . . It will be followed by the equalization of the condition of society and the restoration of the unity of the human family. . . . Liberty has developed under improved forms of government, and science has subjected nature in Western Europe and in America. Navigation, improved by steam, enables men to outstrip the winds, and intelligence conveyed by electricity excels in velocity the light. With these favoring circumstances there has come also a sudden abundance of gold that largely relieves labor from its long subjection to realized capital. Sir, this movement is no delusion."

A little farther on he asked:

"Who does not see that this movement [of commerce] must effect our own complete emancipation from what remains of European influence and prejudice, and in turn develop the American opinion and influence which shall remould constitutions, laws, and customs in the land that is first greeted by the rising sun? Sir, although I am no socialist, no dreamer of a suddenly coming millennium, I nevertheless cannot reject the hope that peace is now to have her sway, and that as war has hitherto defaced and saddened the Atlantic world, the better passions of mankind will soon have their development in the new theatre of human activity."

He fancied that this change was to be wrought not by means of wars and conquests, but by commerce. "Whatever nation shall put that commerce into full employment, and shall conduct it steadily with adequate expansion, will become necessarily the greatest of existing states; greater than any that has ever existed." Although England's flag was to be met almost everywhere—"rooted into the very earth," claiming supremacy in continents, and whatever is most valuable in all the oceans—and although her commerce was advanced by the never-tiring steam-engine and by her thoughts, language, and religion, Seward correctly believed that our resources were abundant for competition with her.



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Here we see Seward in his best, his true rôle. The proposition was right, constitutional, and statesmanlike. There was no section to be flattered, no class of voters to be wheedled, no selfish or ulterior purpose to serve. Therefore he gave rein to his intelligence and his highest impulses. His graceful paragraphs show fine literary skill and oratorical power; his arguments are shielded by no sophistical antitheses; his eloquence is the product of real feelings; his dreams and prophecies express the hopes of a zealous philanthropist, an ambitious patriot, and an over-confident federalist.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE MAN AND THE SENATOR, 1849-61

SEWARD's intellectual and social qualities were most attractive. Yet probably no other antislavery man, on entering Congress, encountered such strong prejudices. "The newspapers have given me so bad a character that I am regarded with alarm and apprehension," he wrote from Washington in February, 1849. His manner was dignified, but not courtly, and his easy and unpretentious address was very pleasing. Although Mrs. Seward's health compelled her to remain in Auburn most of the time, the Senator, unlike the great majority of his colleagues, always kept a well-equipped house in Washington.

A social dinner was his favorite form of hospitality. Of course northern Whigs or Republicans were most frequently invited, but he early sought friendly relations with political adversaries. Of a dinner-party in April, 1852, Mrs. Seward reported: "We had, as usual, a singular combination of ultra-southern men, Free-Soilers, and Democratic members of Congress." In December, 1853, he gave a reception to the Whig delegation from New York, and to "such other Whigs as choose to come—say forty or fifty." On May 28, 1858, he wrote: "I invited all the Anti-Lecompton members of Congress to supper last night, together with most of the foreign Ministers. Nearly all came from North, South, East, and West, Republicans, 'Americans,' and Democrats, and we had a very joyful time." Seward's house was much

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like a club where political questions were discussed with frankness, even with opponents. There was rarely any ostentation in his entertainments during this period, but he did not overlook the average public man's appreciation of good dishes and choice wines and cigars.

His personal habits were well suited to his political position and his many duties. He dressed plainly, usually in black. He rose early, contrary to Washington custom: at five or six in summer, and an hour or so later in winter.¹ He often enjoyed an early walk to the market, and rarely omitted his daily letter to Mrs. Seward when they were separated.² He wrote to her in 1850: "I [have] had my walk, a visit to the public greenhouse, my coffee and eggs, and the *Intelligencer*, and now indulge myself with a word to you, before beginning the studies of the day." He was an inveterate smoker. He drank little except at dinner, and then in moderation; but he was always fond of the good-fellowship and sprightly conversation that wine and brandy are likely to inspire. He was much amused by a remark made in his house by Greeley to the servant

¹ In a letter of May 16, 1850, to his wife, he said: "I retire at ten, and thus have enabled myself to resume my habit of rising at five."

² A few sentences from these notes will amply show their character:

"I have set my window wide open to draw in the morning sun, and I begin the labor of the day as usual by rehearsing to you the details and incidents of the day that has just past."

"Your letters woo me home strongly by so many touching notices of my children, of the trees and flowers, and of friends."

On his fifty-fourth birthday he said: "I write to you a note to express to you my joy at your returning health, and my assurances of continued and enduring affection. I would that I were nearer to you."

"This is Christmas Eve. House solitary. How poor I am! I shall wake up to-morrow and there will be no beaming faces around me, no children, no friends. Well, I am tired of this, and I have but one more Christmas after it to spend in Washington."

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filling a champagne-glass: "That's right. All that you put in *there* is warranted not to kill!" As to work, he had the happy faculty of accomplishing a great deal without seeming to be weighed down by it. He thought so far ahead and was so rapid a planner that he was hardly ever caught unprepared. Sumner told his colleagues that the New York Senator's life had been one of "unsurpassed industry." After Seward moved to Washington his opportunities for miscellaneous reading became fewer and fewer. "What luxury there is in reading nowadays, when all that is done that way is not merely by stealth, but by 'flat burglary'!"¹

¹ *Globe*, 1855-56, Apdx., 540.

² Seward, 185. Writing of his father's summer life in Auburn, Mr. F. W. Seward says: "He rose usually at six, and liked either a walk in the garden or a canter on horseback of a mile or two before breakfast. Then meeting the family at table, he would tell them what new flower was in bloom, what fruit had ripened, what birds had come, and how they were occupied, what change or improvement he found in the village streets or on the country roads. After a cigar and the morning paper, he would go to the old writing-chair in the bay-window of the tower, and here write his letters and study law-cases or public addresses. . . . Sometimes the visitors would be so frequent, and the visits so long, that he would find it necessary to supplement the day's work by continuing his studies till late at night. The papers in his cases would be sent to the law-office to be copied." . . .

"He liked to push his work vigorously . . . and then take a day for recreation. With his family, or some friend or neighbor, he would drive to the Owasco or Cayuga lake and spend the day in boating or fishing. Or he would take a longer drive to Skaneateles, Aurora, Elbridge, or some other village in the vicinity, call upon acquaintances there, and return at nightfall. In the evening, when not at work, he liked a rubber of whist, conversation, or reading."

. . . "Though having little leisure, he contrived to find time, in the course of a season, for a good deal of reading. Old and standard authors he preferred to any literary novelties. He would devote his spare moments, for a week or two, to some poet, philosopher, or historian, and then take up another. Chaucer and Spenser, Ben Jonson and Ariosto, were among his favorites at this period. Of English

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Of all the public men of his time, probably Seward travelled most extensively for pleasure. It was not strange that social and political questions in all states and countries interested him, but it is very unusual to find a busy and ambitious politician that has eyes and ears and tastes for almost everything. The careful and interesting accounts that Seward wrote of his experiences from day to day are crowded with evidences of his enthusiastic temperament, quick perception, and great mental and physical activity.

In July, 1857, the Senator and Mr. and Mrs. Frederick W. Seward started on a trip to Labrador. They made several short stops between Niagara and Quebec. Just for enjoyment and novelty they spent a whole night in a rowboat on the St. Lawrence. At Quebec a fishing schooner was chartered. They engaged a captain, a pilot, and a seaman, and laid in provisions and equipments for a month's cruise. Labrador was the goal, and sailing and fishing according to wind and other circumstances were the chief pleasures. They caught cod, mackerel, trout, salmon, and lobsters, at different times. Seward kept a "Log of the Schooner *Emerence*," from July 31 to August 27, 1857. It was written in a flowing, jocose style, and was designed merely for the family circle at Auburn. But it was found to be so pleasing that the senatorial sailor consented to its publication in the New York *Tribune* and the Albany *Evening Journal*.¹ A few selections from this log will give the flavor of Seward's quality as a traveller and descriptive writer :

essayists he liked Sidney Smith, Macaulay, Mackintosh, Jeffrey, and Carlyle. Prescott's histories he read as fast as they came out. Brougham's Political Philosophy, Lieber's Political Ethics, Burke's Speeches, and Tooke's *Diversions of Purley*, he read over more than once."—2 Seward, 203, 204.

¹ 2 Seward, 302 ff.

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"There was a dispute kept up for some time, yesterday, between the cook and the pilot, whether the waters around us were fresh still, or salt. We compromised by boiling our soup with fresh water from the cask, and our pork with that brought up from the depth beneath us. Toward night, myriads of ducks dotted the waves, and so late as ten o'clock birds were heard singing in notes not unlike those of the robin and the mocking-bird. Here and there a huge porpoise disturbed the glassy surface as he came up to inhale, and once or twice a seal thrust his black and hairy doglike head like a buoy above the water. We studied the geography of the moon through our spy-glass, after the headlands of our planet became indistinct in the darkness."

"At two P.M. yesterday we passed a high rocky point, and the river Saguenay was disclosed to our view. It is a mile wide at its mouth, but this magnificent flood seems narrow in contrast with the twenty miles breadth of the St. Lawrence. The Saguenay inspired admiration when first seen, three hundred years ago, by white men, and it is marvellous yet. It flows from Lake St. John (eighty miles northward from here) in a defile between mountains fifteen hundred to two thousand and two thousand five hundred feet high, and its depth lower than that of the St. Lawrence. Far up as we could see, and those acquainted say so far as it is navigable, its banks are rugged, and scarce a habitation is found upon it. The shore of the St. Lawrence is almost equally rugged. Here and there is a hamlet hung on the mountain-side, surrounded by sterility itself. . . . We landed on the rocks, where a dead porpoise and a dead seal had been washed by the tide. On the beach we were kindly received by a young Scotchman, who lives in a long, low, and old building, which proves, inside, to be a very respectable mansion, and which overlooks the bay. . . . He gave us brandy-and-water, and tendered us hospitalities under his roof for a day or a week. He showed us peltries and snow-shoes and the Indian-made apparel which he uses in his excursions in the winter."

"The events recorded in this Log are not great nor brilliant. They determine neither the fate of states nor the character of heroes. But they are nevertheless dramatic in one respect. They are various and sudden in their transition. Yesterday at noon we were humbly suing a

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Yankee fisherman, with our silver in hand, for a few mackerel. At tea we were called off by the pilot to attend to our lines. I drew up, from the depth of one hundred feet, a huge cod. Hardly had we disengaged him from the hook when F. drew up two at once, and then even A. brought up one, large enough for an alderman's feast, from his watery home. We continued enjoying this sport for two hours, when we relinquished it, simply because it was inhuman and a waste of time to add to our stores at present."

"At five this morning the forest was whitened with puffins leaving their roosts, and cawing and clamorous so as to be heard for miles. Ducks are sailing round us with the utmost nonchalance; porpoises are taking air-baths; and last evening, after we had wearied ourselves with drawing cod-fish up from their recesses, and the sun had just set, a young whale calf, almost as large as an elephant, appeared just off the after quarter-deck, and moved around to the bows, near enough to be taken with a noose."

A journey of a different character was the one that began with such unusual demonstrations in New York harbor in May, 1859.¹ He visited the great capitals and had interviews with many of the rulers and famous statesmen of Europe. When it is remembered that Seward had never held office in any administration, and that his name was, at best, but little known on the continent of Europe, this trip was a very surprising expression of his ambition to know, and be known among, the great public men of the world.

During the two months spent in England he received such attentions as are rarely shown to any one less than a Secretary of State or a Minister. Queen Victoria invited him to be presented without the usual delay. The names of the prominent persons he met would make a long list. Among them were Palmerston, Lord John Russell, Gladstone, Macaulay, Harriet Martineau, and

¹ See Vol. I., p. 494. ² Seward, 362-436, gives the traveller's records of the trip.

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many others famous in politics or literature. Breakfasts, luncheons, dinners, receptions, and balls he attended as if he were a visiting diplomatist of great fame and high rank. He did not exaggerate when he wrote: "I leap from grave to gay—from history to poetry and romance. I fall flat into the midst of spindles and power-looms. Just now I am fresh from Holyrood, and old Stirling, and from patrimonial seats of the nobility—fallen into the black, thick smoke of Yorkshire." Manchester, Glasgow, and Leeds, with their countless industries and many thousands of factory-hands, did not interest him less than vast country estates and the aristocratic society of London.

In France he met Lamartine and several Ministers of State, and spent a day very familiarly with Napoleon III. at Compiègne. In Rome everything seemed to interest him, and of course he—a candidate for the presidential nomination in 1860—did not overlook the influence of the Catholic Church. The Pope granted him a long audience, and gave him his blessing. Pius IX. knew all about the New York Senator's past, and playfully expressed "some good wishes for my [Seward's] higher advancement." It also appeared that the Holy Father had received many publications of the United States government on geology and natural history. Who but Seward would have dreamed that such documents would call forth the Pope's hearty thanks as they did? Elsewhere in Italy he had interviews with Victor Emanuel and Cavour. He visited the ruin of Cicero's Tusculum, and spent eight hours alone in Pompeii, letting his imagination conjure up the strange scenes and incidents of life there eighteen centuries before.

He went from Italy to Egypt. Desiring to see the Holy Land also, but finding no steamboat, he chartered a fruit-boat hailing from Jaffa. Its captain and seven seamen spoke only Arabic. A few sentences from the

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record he kept of the weird voyage of several days will suffice to show how Seward stopped at no obstacles and laughed at all privations :

“The ship is a schooner of about twenty tons; her name, *The Blest*, is her only good trait. . . .

“There are no berths, no beds, no tables, no provisions, no dishes. We hastily extemporized our arrangements. A dozen chickens, a bologna sausage, six dozen eggs, with rice and bread and tea, constitute our stores. Four pieces of matting, two laid under us, one over us, and one wrapt around the courier, serve for our beds. The cabin is filled with dry sand for ballast; and ants, cockroaches, and all kinds of vermin inhabit it. We therefore sleep, as well as sit, on the deck.

“The courier is our cook; an inverted half-barrel is our table; but we do not approach it too near, lest it may expose us to vermin. For lack of chairs, we sit down on the deck, and screen ourselves from the sun as well as we can by the shade of the sails.”

In Vienna he called on Rechberg, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and was granted an audience by the Emperor. A few days later he visited the battle-fields of Magenta and Solferino, lately drenched in blood. From Brussels he went to see the famous field of Waterloo. King Leopold I. of Belgium invited him to a state dinner and in other ways showed him special attention.

Seward's oratory and genius for expression reached their highest development while he was Senator; for he was then in his prime physically, and had more time for reflection than later.¹ Some have thought Seward's speeches more showy than brilliant. He was not an orator by nature, and his style lacked the flow and rhythm common in the best productions of such

¹ For some mention of his characteristics as writer and orator in an earlier period, see *ante*, Vol. I., 189 ff.

reversion of your broad domain descend to us unincumbered and free from the calamities and from the sorrows of human bondage.'"¹

It was not uncommon for Seward to speak on special occasions. Four formal addresses were delivered in the years 1853-55: "The Destiny of America," at the dedication of the Capital University, Columbus, Ohio; "The True Basis of American Independence," before the American Institute, New York city; "The Physical, Moral, and Intellectual Development of the American People," before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Yale College; and "The Pilgrims and Liberty," at Plymouth.² They gave him an opportunity to project his speculations and generalizations into broader fields than were usually open to him. In eloquence these efforts cannot be classed as of the first order, nor were the occasions especially inspiring; but in thought, expression, and interest they deserve a high rank as political essays rather than orations. The formal speech at Plymouth was a profound study of the political significance of the ideas and acts of the Pilgrims, and it would have been strange, even with Seward's poor elocution, if it had not received great praise. But these and other public addresses not of a partisan character are now important chiefly as expositions of Seward's theories of our national development, and as indications of what he would have preferred to do in politics if he had had a free hand. They will also convince any candid man that Seward had a statesmanlike philosophy and an extraordinary intellect.

As Seward avoided as much as possible Weed's province of keeping up confidential relations with political followers, he won new supporters by his non-partisan

¹ For other passages in the imaginative style, see 1 *Works*, 179 ff., 235 ff.

² 4 *Works*, 121-203.

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masters as Webster, Clay, and Beecher. But the speeches of no political orator of the period were so popular and effective, or attained so high an average of excellence. As Morley has said of Burke, Seward's speeches had "the style of his subjects, the amplitude, the weightiness, the laboriousness, the sense, the high flight," suited to the discussion of questions that were of vital moment to the nation. They were ardent, and many of them were designed to increase popular excitement. Yet they contained a surprising amount of political wisdom and sound judgment. His philosophizing about liberty and political morality, his grasp of the leading facts in the territorial, industrial, and social development of our country, and his skill in arousing prejudice, indignation, anger, sympathy, fear, or courage—these and many other qualities gave strength, color, and charm to what he said. He was a close student of Burke, and, like that great Irishman, he studied and practised politics with his imagination; it showed in all his speaking and writing. The last paragraph of the "higher-law" speech is a good illustration:

"For the vindication of that vote, I look not to the verdict of the passing hour, disturbed as the public mind now is by conflicting interests and passions, but to that period, happily not far distant, when the vast regions over which we are now legislating shall have received their destined inhabitants.

"While looking forward to that day, its countless generations seem to me to be rising up and passing in dim and shadowy review before us; and a voice comes forth from their serried ranks, saying: 'Waste your treasures and your armies, if you will; raze your fortifications to the ground; sink your navies into the sea; transmit to us even a dishonored name, if you must; but the soil you hold in trust for us—give it to us free. You found it free, and conquered it to extend a better and surer freedom over it. Whatever choice you have made for yourselves, let us have no partial freedom; let us all be free; let the

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² 4 *Works*, 121-203.

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addresses and cultivated their friendship by the distribution of his political speeches with probably a more lavish hand than any Senator of the time. He often said that he spent his whole salary in the printing and circulation of his speeches.¹ His private correspondence shows that bundles of his speeches were forwarded to devoted supporters in different parts of the United States for distribution. As early as the beginning of 1852 he asked one of his political friends in California for a list of the prominent Whigs of that State.² The speeches were sent in all directions and often without solicitation. The recipients always felt pleased—for in those days almost any sort of reading-matter was welcome—and they must often have wondered how the famous New-Yorker had obtained their names and addresses. "I am hurried by sending off speeches by the thousand," he wrote, August 5, 1852. In subsequent years it was oftener a matter of tens of thousands, and sometimes of hundreds of thousands.

Seward's bearing as a Senator and as a party antagonist was excellent. His prominence, and the keenness and importance of what he said, made him the object of frequent and severe attacks. The charges were often very offensive, and were designed to injure his reputation. Shortly after the delivery of the "higher-law" speech he said: "I am not to be drawn into personal altercations by interrogatories addressed to me. I acknowledge the patriotism, the wisdom, the purity of every member of this body."³ And again he announced:

"I shall never assail the motives of any members of this body. I shall never defend myself against any imputation

¹ 2 Seward, 162 ; 3 Seward, 481.

² This is shown by a letter in the Seward MSS. from W. H. Shepard, San Francisco, February 28, 1852.

³ *Globe*, 1849-50, 518.

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of motives made against me. If such imputations are made, in whatever shape they may come, as they have done [come?] in various shapes here, I shall pass them by in silence. They will not in the least disturb my equanimity. I will venture further to assure those who may make them, that they will not in the least degree change my social and private feelings in regard to them."¹

This was a very extraordinary policy, but what is stranger, he adhered to it without a single important exception. Foote was the most persistent and insulting of Seward's political enemies. It was notorious at the time that, after one of the Mississippian's most inexcusable attacks, Seward invited him to dinner.² After a Senator had made an important speech it was customary for him to pass around a paper to ascertain just how many copies his colleagues desired to send out. Such a paper in regard to a recent speech by Foote, in which Seward had been criticised with special venom, was accidentally handed to the New York Senator, who promptly subscribed for more than any one else. Foote's surprise and curiosity were hardly satisfied by Seward's explanation that he wanted the copies for distribution in New York!³

Seward's language was not always perfectly respectful and free from sarcasm and reproach. Toward Presidents Pierce and Buchanan he exercised on a few occasions very little self-restraint. But in relation to his colleagues he was equally careful of his own expressions and unmoved by theirs. Mrs. Seward, who was in the gallery one day when some of his remarks drew upon him a "tornado" of reproaches from Democrats, wrote that he "looked the personification of indifference, with his face turned directly toward the speaker."⁴ Natural-

¹ *Globe*, 1849-50, 686.

² *New York Tribune*, March 19, 1850; *Albany Evening Atlas*, March 18, 1850.

³ Statement of Mr. F. W. Seward to the author.

⁴ *2* Seward, 120.

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ly he was sometimes mistaken, and a few times in the course of exciting debates his remarks were cutting; but whenever any exception was taken to them by a fellow-Senator he was ready to repair any injustice. It was true, as he remarked in the first debate on the Clayton-Bulwer treaty: "I have received injuries, many of them, here. The memory of them died in the hour in which they were committed."¹ He neither interrupted an opponent by annoying questions nor assumed a contentious personal attitude. Angry altercations between Senators were frequent, but Seward was never concerned with them except in the capacity of a peacemaker.² In 1856 he said: "I therefore hold (as a general truth) that all men are sincere and honest; and I hold him to be merely a fool who esteems me to be otherwise."³ He early adopted for his guidance Cowper's lines—

"A moral, sensible, and well-bred man
Will not affront me,—and no other can."⁴

Notwithstanding these traits, Seward was, until the winter of 1860-61, the politician most hated and feared by the pro-slavery zealots. Benjamin expressed the general opinion of the South when he called him "the distinguished author of almost every heresy that appears" regarding slavery.⁵ The secessionists usually had Seward in mind when they threatened that the

¹ 1 *Works*, 385.

² In June, 1858, he negotiated peace between Senators Davis, of Mississippi, and Chandler, of Michigan, and between Gwin, of California, and Wilson, of Massachusetts. In the latter instance a challenge had been sent.—2 Seward, 346.

³ 4 *Works*, 563.

⁴ 8 Seward, 481. In answer to Hale's severe criticism on account of supporting the army bill, he calmly remarked: "I never yet have seen the time when I could not bear a difference with friends, as I never yet have seen the time when I cared in the least for unkind or hostile reproaches from my enemies."—*Globe*, 1857-58, 520.

⁵ *Globe*, 1855-56, 1094.

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Union should come to an end in case of the election of a "black Republican" President. Nevertheless, Seward took special pains to cultivate pleasant personal relations with prominent Southerners. Unlike Sumner and others, he had no prejudices against slave-holders. "Differences of opinion, even on the subject of slavery, with us are political, not social or personal, differences. There is not one disunionist or disloyalist among us all," he said in February, 1860. He was at one time very friendly with Jefferson Davis.¹ Senator Gwin, hardly less a Southerner than Davis, was a useful link between Seward and the leaders from the other section.² At the beginning of 1858 Seward wrote to his son Frederick: "The southern and Democratic opposition in social circles has given way, and society of all classes is profuse in its courtesies." Even in the midst of the Civil War he spoke of "our old brethren of the South . . . with whom we used to have such pleasant social times."³

¹ 1 Davis's *Jefferson Davis*, 579 ff.

² Derby's *Fifty Years*, etc., 70. The following story is at least approximately true, and well illustrates some of Seward's characteristics: "Mr. Seward was anxious to enter the 'charmed circle' of southern social life, from which, as a 'black Republican,' he was rigidly excluded. Doctor Gwin, with considerable trepidation, he afterwards confessed, invited him to a large dinner-party at his house, where nearly all the guests were southern Senators—among them, Toombs, Hunter, Mason, and Breckinridge—and their wives. Mrs. Gwin, afraid to assign him to any of the lady guests, herself took Mr. Seward in to dinner. Mr. Seward, by his brilliant and interesting conversation, soon dissipated the chilliness his presence had caused, and turned into a great success what Doctor Gwin had feared would prove a dismal failure.

"The next day Mr. Hunter said to Mr. Toombs: 'When I met Seward to-day he had the impertinence to say, "Good-morning, Brother Hunter."' 'Did you knock him down?' exclaimed Toombs. 'Why, no,' replied Hunter; 'how could I knock a man down for calling me his brother?'"—18 *Overland Monthly*, 2d series, p. 470.

³ 5 *Works*, 512.

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As long as the Whig party lasted Seward's success as a leader depended on his keeping up agreeable relations with the southern Whigs. There were so many stories to the effect that in private he disavowed what he had said in public that there must have been some ground for them, although the inferences drawn were probably erroneous. Here is a fair illustration: Jefferson Davis, when ill and in a nervous condition, once asked:

" 'Mr. Seward, how can you make, with a grave face, those piteous appeals for the negro that you did in the Senate; you were too long a school-master in Georgia to believe the things you say?'

" He looked at me [Mrs. Davis] quizzically, and smilingly answered, 'I do not, but these appeals, as you call them, are potent to affect the rank and file of the North.' Mr. Davis said, very much shocked at Mr. Seward's answer, 'But, Mr. Seward, do you never speak from conviction alone?' 'Nev—er,' answered he. Mr. Davis raised up his blindfolded head, and with much heat, whispered, 'As God is my judge, I never spoke from any other motive.' Mr. Seward put his arm about him and gently laid down his head, saying, with great tenderness, 'I know you do not—I am always sure of it.'

" After this inscrutable human moral, or immoral, paradox left us, we sat long discussing him with sincere regret and the hope that he had been making a feigned confidence to amuse us."¹

This response was undoubtedly his jesting and evasive way of attempting to convey some such thought as this: "We are speaking of an unpleasant subject for conversation between us. Think as you like about me; it would be useless to try to explain to you what concerns myself and my constituents." Another story, also recorded many years after the alleged incident occurred, reports Seward as acknowledging, while travelling in Virginia, that he had not been in earnest in declaring that the annexation of Texas would be unconstitutional, but had

¹ 1 Davis's *Jefferson Davis*, 581.

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made such a declaration because Texas was not to be free territory.¹ As to the incident in Virginia, a letter of the time makes it plain that Seward's aim was to avoid discussing sectional questions on social occasions.²

During the twelve years of his senatorship Seward was a staunch partisan. More than once he refused to stand with the majority, but it was always because he believed that his ideas were wiser politically. In his first speech in the Senate he tried to persuade his Whig colleagues of the South that he had "the right to entertain and debate extreme opinions, without proscription and with fidelity to the Union."³ This was the shrewdest sort of partisanship. Just after the "higher-law" speech, Dawson asked him if he still claimed to be a Whig. Seward answered thus:

"My duty is to promote the welfare, interest, and happiness of the people of the United States; and I hold that I can do so in no effectual way by going alone and independent. That is always the error of schismatics. Therefore, in the discharge of my duty, I ally myself to such a party as I find most approximate to the principles and sentiments that I entertain. I will do the Whig party the justice, or injustice, to say that I have been a member of it all my active life; and I will do it the great disservice to say that, no matter what may happen, and who may put me under the ban, I shall be the last to leave it, however individuals may disown me or the principles I maintain. I shall adhere to it, because I think of the two great parties it is the most devoted to the cause of freedom and emancipation."⁴

Early in 1858 there was an angry debate in the Senate on the proposition to increase the army for the avowed purpose of putting down the insurrection of the Mor-

¹ 7 *Southern Historical Society Papers*, 354. Don Platt's *Memories*, etc., 136 ff., and 129 *North American Review*, 135, give other illustrations.

² 1 Seward, 777, 778.

³ 2 Seward, 106.

⁴ *Globe*, 1849-50, 513.

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mons, who had expelled all evidence of Federal authority from their would-be independent "State of Deseret." Hale, Fessenden, and other Republicans feared lest Buchanan might employ the additional forces against the free-state men in Kansas. With Seward it was an axiom that it was unsafe for any public man to withhold means desired for defence of the government. In different ways he tried to prevent the use of the proposed regiment for any except the specified purpose, but he would not oppose the administration's request. Hale unjustly likened Seward's attitude to that of Webster on March 7, 1850; and he cut Seward to the quick by referring to him as the man "upon whom the eyes and the hearts of the friends of liberty have centred and clustered," and by adding that he himself had expected that Seward "might lead great hosts to the consummation of their hopes and their wishes."¹ "I think I may claim," Seward replied, indirectly, "that, when ten years shall have passed over the debates of to-day, when ten years of rest shall have been allowed to me after my service here shall have been completed, there will be no man living who, with the records all before him, will be able to tell whether I belonged to one party or another. No, sir; I know nothing, I care nothing—I never did, I never shall, for party."² However, he wrote a few days later: "Mormonism belongs to the brood of 'Popular Sovereignty.' Connection with it does not seemingly harm the Democratic party. *But how long could the Republican party survive the clear or imputed responsibility for any disaster on the Plains? I have studied the matter deeply, and conversed with officers and others.*"³

Seward continued to hear the two voices—in fact, he continued to act two distinct rôles. It was John Quincy

¹ *Globe*, 1857-58, 520.

³ *Globe*, 1857-58, 521.

² Seward, 385. Not italicized in the original.

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Adams Seward that uttered the telling phrases and made the severe arraignments and was the hope of the radicals like Gerrit Smith, Theodore Parker, and, at times, of the Garrisonians.¹ He usually favored what was boldest and most extreme if it stopped short of violence. On the other hand, Thurlow Weed Seward kept in close relations with the party organization; he watched the plans of the politicians, changed the programme to suit conditions, and tried to win all classes of men. Adams Seward was ardently antislavery and expected to live in history as a great philanthropist. Weed Seward was determined to control the patronage and to live in the White House. The one regarded himself as a martyr to a sacred cause, and wrote: "I am *alone*, in the Senate and in Congress, and about in the United States, alone. While adhering faithfully to the Whigs, I dare to hold on the disallowed right of disenfranchised men and classes. I must stand in that solitude and maintain it, or fall altogether."² The other was alone in deciding which principles and theories should be given prominence and which should be ignored or explained away. The result was that Seward continued to be the political favorite of a large proportion of the champions of freedom and of ardent youthful voters of the best impulses, as well as of the practical men and hard-headed politicians, calculating on tendencies and eager for office.

¹ To Gerrit Smith he wrote, March 31, 1858: "Accept my thanks for your approval [probably of the speech of March 3, 1858]. I hope you may live to number many more years and to witness the decline of that monstrous evil which we have resisted together so long.

"I begin to have faith in the uprising of the masses. I have never before seen such indications of anxiety and desire to hear in the slave states. When we shall have trained the whole generation of the free states to principles of freedom will they not carry those principles into their new homes, and where under the flag will they not make those homes?"—MS. His correspondence with Parker was equally friendly.

² 2 Seward, 116.

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When, in 1850, Seward thought that courage and dash and the "higher law" would win, he rushed ahead fearlessly. In 1851-52 he submitted to the conditions of compromise and would take no risks with the anti-slavery agitators. But he was ready to go with the jingoes "as far as he who goes farthest" in reckless intermeddling with foreign affairs when it would serve as a profitable digression, or as a means of benefiting his party or of injuring the Democrats. At times, during the Kansas excitement, he was one of the most successful, and almost revolutionary, agitators. After the John Brown invasion, when passions needed cooling and calming influences, he undertook to demonstrate that the impending dangers were not due to a real conflict of interests and principles, as he had repeatedly said, but were largely imaginary. In the campaign of 1860 he once more gallantly led the charge. But in December, when the storm-cloud appeared, he again became very conservative and cautious. Watching the changing circumstances, his first aim, as leader of the opposition, was not so much to advance principles as to use them as a means to party victories. His great successes were the result of keen perceptions, quick sympathies, and close association with men of different types and tendencies. He rarely failed where success was possible, because he was almost sure to see every opportunity, and to make the most of it. A statesman in character and purpose, he was yet a consummate opportunist.

Seward would have preferred to be a theorizer and non-partisan reformer—for his natural tastes and temperament were of that character—if thereby he could have obtained the fame and the power he sought. He acted on the theory that whatever his ideas might be, they were of little consequence unless there was some opportunity for him to carry them out. So the question how to gain personal ascendancy was always present.

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He believed that the Whig and then the Republican party would be much better for the country in any case than the Democratic party. To support a third party would entail a loss of time, and at least a temporary sacrifice of power. As his influence and success increased, he came to look upon himself as the one person that could defeat the schemes and undermine the strength of the Democrats and the secessionists. Once in authority, he would advance the public interests as fast as the people approved. To advocate right principles at a time when to do so would strengthen the opposition, or to maintain a strict consistency and frank honesty in public utterances at the expense of letting an enemy gain an advantage, he regarded as a mistaken use of one's resources—a surrender of a practical good to a theoretical one. Of course Seward's sincerity was often brought into question, much to his own sorrow. However, nothing, of which absolute knowledge is impossible, is more certain than that he was never consciously inconsistent. He considered the object, and by it tested the means. In his mind there was no inconsistency between being opposed to compromise in 1850 and in favor of it in 1861; between denouncing popular sovereignty in 1854 and accepting it in 1858; because each position was, at the particular time, believed to be most favorable to freedom. Likewise, to take one attitude regarding the Clayton-Bulwer treaty in 1853, and just the opposite one in 1856, did not prove real inconsistency, for his aim on both occasions was to prevent the Democrats from gaining an advantage. Such was his philosophy of action.

To call him a great politician is neither precise nor adequate. He is entitled to the rank that results from a fair judgment of his qualities as a Senator in comparison with those of his contemporaries in active politics. In sincerity and in the moral quality of his purposes he

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was as much below Sumner as Sumner was below him in political skill and practical statesmanship. Hale was hardly more than a merry, sincere, and effective agitator. Chase was mentally less brilliant than Seward, but his character was more ingenuous. His services were so generally recognized that if he had had a manager like Weed, and if Seward had been dependent on his own resources, Chase might have outranked his New York rival. Cass and Douglas and Marcy were inferior to Seward in methods, purposes, and associations. Of the southern men, Jefferson Davis most resembled him in his talent for directing the thoughts and influencing the action of a whole section. But neither Davis nor any other contemporary, except Clay, could rival Seward in his genius for politics and the wide range of his abilities. Although Seward's estimate of himself was in many respects inaccurate, it is safe to say that Seward the Senator—like Seward the chief of the New York Whigs, in the previous years—stands first, among all the successful public men with whom he was associated, in the quality and extent of his service. His senatorial career is probably the best illustration in American history of how far the politician may go toward reform, and how much the reformer must bend to practical politics in order to attain position and power and accomplish results that contemporaries and history regard as great. He was not the father of the Republican party; but he, more than any other man, was its master. He was not the first of antislavery champions; but of the great antislavery North, having a reasonable and worthy political purpose, he was, as Jefferson Davis said, "the directing intellect."

CHAPTER XXVIII

SIGNS OF THE INADEQUACY OF SEWARD'S POLICY OF PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

SEWARD became Secretary of State March 5, 1861. No chief of that department has had difficulties and opportunities as great as those that confronted Seward. Before them the stoutest heart might well have grown faint and the most resourceful mind have been filled with doubts. Seward was hopeful, confident, even.

Prior to March 4th, the Republicans had necessarily been theorists merely, for they had lacked the power to legislate or to administer the laws. Now they were in full possession of the executive branch of the government, and had practical control of Congress; and, therefore, they were bound to pursue a definite course. The all-important question was: How shall the secession movement, actual and prospective, be met and overcome?

Most of the inhabitants of the city of Washington sympathized more with the disunionists than with the Republicans, and hardly any of them believed in vigorous measures. The well-organized and determined Confederacy of seven states was not immediately in front of the national capital, but it rested safely behind a double row of states, which promised to serve the purpose of a vast series of defensive fortifications. It was a foregone conclusion that if anything resembling coercion should be directed against a slave state, the wide territory between the District of Columbia and the Confederacy

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would quickly swarm with armed secessionists. Theoretically it was the plain duty of the President to enforce the laws and protect the property of the nation, but practically there were numerous grave objections. Many men at the North denied that the central government had the constitutional right to do more than to act defensively. Others insisted that there was no warrant whatever for an attempt to conquer the resistance of a whole state, much less that of a group of states.

If the Confederacy had gained possession of all the forts within its territory, as it did of the post-offices and custom-houses, probably there would have been no war for the Union. But Fort Sumter, in Charleston harbor, and in sight of the fountain of secession, was still held by United States troops. They also retained possession of Fort Pickens, off Pensacola, Florida, which was the chief stronghold of the Gulf. The stars and stripes continued to wave over a few forts of minor importance, which the Confederates expected would soon be a part of their domain. Neither Fort Sumter nor Fort Pickens could be voluntarily surrendered or evacuated by the United States without national humiliation and a confession of inability or fear to resist disunion. Nor could the Confederacy consent to the retention of these forts by the Federal government without inviting the reproach that it dared not assert the sovereignty it claimed. Hence, the thoughtful men on each side calculated that if there was to be a war it would begin at one of these points. So far, a conflict had been avoided by means of mutual agreements: the Confederates in each locality promised not to attack the neighboring fort on condition that Buchanan would not endeavor to reinforce it. The effect of this was highly beneficial to the secessionists. Every day the resources of Major Anderson, who was in command of Fort Sumter, became less, while South Carolina was surrounding the harbor with forts and obstruct-

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ing the channel. Although the *Brooklyn* and other warships, with hundreds of troops aboard, hovered about and might have reinforced Fort Pickens and removed all danger of its seizure, this ill-balanced truce, so stupid and cowardly on Buchanan's part, tied the hands of the United States officers, while the Confederates planted batteries and prepared for offensive warfare.

It was expected that Lincoln's inaugural address would either contain an unequivocal declaration that would lead to a vigorous policy and the execution of the laws or exhibit a willingness to compromise and thereby strengthen those favoring conciliation. It did neither. Concessionists and coercionists each argued that it committed the new administration to their side. The pledge that the power confided in the President would "be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties and imposts," was much weakened by the further announcement that "beyond what may be necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion, no using of force against or among the people anywhere." This showed that some laws and executive duties were to be overlooked. The address might mean either war or peace, according to the stress put upon different passages, but even in its most touching appeals for reconciliation and fraternity there was no suggestion of cowardice. It is now plain that no definite course of action had been determined.

On March 5th, Lincoln was surprised to learn from Judge Holt, still Secretary of War, that Major Anderson had reported that it would be impossible to retain Fort Sumter more than a few weeks, unless it should be reinforced and resupplied, and that it would require twenty thousand men to relieve and hold the fort against the Confederates. The papers were referred to General Scott for his opinion, and on the same day he replied,

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"Evacuation seems almost inevitable."¹ Because several of the ablest military men agreed with Scott that it was doubtful if the difficulties of reinforcement could be overcome, it was "openly and half-officially printed in the newspapers nearly a whole week"² that the troops were to be withdrawn.³ There is no positive evidence that Lincoln ever said directly that Sumter would be evacuated, but there are many signs that he thought such an outcome likely.⁴ However, he continued to make inquiries and to study the perplexing situation.

Delay and indecision were prolonged by the greed and persistency of the office-seekers. It seemed as if the surging, enthusiastic crowds at the Chicago convention had marched upon Washington to claim their rewards. Until long after 1861 the Jacksonian "clean sweep" was one of the first principles of party contests; and if ever excusable, it surely was when the offices were filled with men appointed by the present leaders of secession. Applicants so swarmed in and about the White House and the department buildings that it was difficult to go or come. The President, as Seward said, took up first the business that was most pressed upon him, and this was the distribution of the spoils.⁵ The main question was discussed, but decision was postponed from day to

¹ 3 Nicolay and Hay, 378.

² 3 Nicolay and Hay, 400, 407.

³ Stanton reported to Buchanan, March 12th, that it was then "the universal impression in this city that Sumter and Pickens will both be surrendered."—2 Curtis's *Buchanan*, 531.

⁴ Crawford, 364. Scott considered the abandonment of Sumter so probable that he drafted an order to that effect for the President's signature.—3 Nicolay and Hay, 408.

⁵ On March 16, 1861, Seward wrote: "Solicitors for office besiege him, and he, of course, finds his hands full for the present. My duties call me to the White House one, two, or three times a day. The grounds, halls, stairways, closets are filled with applicants, who render ingress and egress difficult."—2 Seward, 508. See also Julian's *Recollections*, 193, 194; 2 Curtis's *Buchanan*, 534.

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day, in the hope that some new occurrence might open a way for its solution.

It was well known that Lincoln's powers as a political debater were of the first order, and of course the election had made him the head of the administration; but he had shown no qualities that had convinced even good judges of men that he would be President in the fullest sense of the word. He was awkward and rustic in his manners and appearance, and was thoroughly unconventional in his talk. It was assumed that either Seward or Chase would have a directing hand in affairs. Coming into strange surroundings, Lincoln wisely leaned on the man he had chosen for the first place in his Cabinet. This must have reminded Seward of how, twelve years before, Taylor accepted his advice and assistance in regard to the most important questions of that time. No one in public life throughout the period since 1849 had been so prominent as Seward. He now really believed that his assurances, that sixty days' more suns would give a much brighter and more cheerful atmosphere, had been made good; that he had "brought the ship off the sands," and that it was his soothing words that had "saved us and carried us along thus far." And all this was entirely true in the sense he meant. What more natural than to infer that if he should either go home or become Minister to England, it would "leave the country to chance"; whereas, if he should go into Lincoln's "compound Cabinet," he could "endure enough to make the experiment successful." When Southerners and their friends questioned his ability to make his policy that of the Republican administration, he had pointed to his influence over General Scott, the head of the army and, until recently, the chief of the coercionists.¹ To the doubting he was

¹ 2 Seward, 505.

² 2 Seward, 518.

³ Gwin's recollections, 18 *Overland Monthly*, 2d series, 460.

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able to show or quote a letter that the General addressed to him on March 3d, as if the Secretary of State instead of the President were to decide how to deal with secession.¹ In fact, had not Lincoln asked and accepted Seward's criticism upon the first written statement of his prospective policy? And although Seward had not been able to bar certain men from the Cabinet, had he not been refused permission to withdraw because Lincoln's feelings and the public interest forbade it? Sitting at the President's right at the Cabinet-table with men who, as he had stated in writing, had not studied the question as he had, was it not a matter of course that his plans must prevail? The tendencies had not changed with the coming of Lincoln and the departure of Buchanan. Seward's numerous channels of influence and information, extending throughout the border slave states and to the very heart of the Confederacy, were still open. What he had accomplished was, in his opinion, merely in preparation for the time when the new administration could meet, with charity and patience, what was declared to be groundless fear; when rewards and punishments could be substituted for warnings and promises, if nothing else sufficed. So Seward continued to think that the future depended upon his management.

¹ It seems likely that this letter was chiefly inspired by Seward. One sentence in it reads: "I beg leave to repeat in writing what I have before said to you orally." Although Scott mentioned four ways of dealing with the difficulties, he made it plain that he preferred the one that was popularly supposed to be Seward's, and he was almost hysterically opposed to what Seward most deprecated.—Scott's *Autobiography* (1864), 625-28. There was a strong suspicion that Thurlow Weed had a hand in the matter. As has been noticed, both Seward and Greeley drafted letters of acceptance for Scott in 1852. Near the end of 1861 the old General published in London and Paris a very able and important letter about the seizure of the *Trent*, every word of which was written by John Bigelow. For a discussion of the question of the intimacy between Seward and Scott, see *post*, p. 124.

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While the other members of the Cabinet were chiefly occupied with a few special questions, or were giving their time to applicants for place, Seward's activity seemed to extend in every direction and to touch all departments. The day he took charge of his new office, he requested Stanton to draw up a nomination of Crittenden for the United States Supreme Court.¹ By means of a prominent resident of Washington he kept up close communications with some of the unionist leaders in the Virginia state convention,² and despatched Lander to the South to "kindle a 'backfire' against secession" in Texas.³ He telegraphed to Gilmer asking for recommendations about appointing a marshal and a United States attorney in North Carolina.⁴ And by scores of acts he showed that he had time and energy for any task, great or small, that came to his hand.

Before the middle of March, Gustavus V. Fox, formerly an officer in the United States Navy, had somewhat counteracted the impression Scott, Anderson, and others had made upon the President. On March 15th Lincoln requested each member of the Cabinet to give a written opinion on this question: "Assuming it to be possible now to provision Fort Sumter, under all the circumstances is it wise to attempt it?"⁵

Seward's answer was given on the same day. It was comprehensive and direct, and as it contains the fullest explanation he ever made of his policy, the leading passages may well be quoted here:

"If it were possible to peacefully provision Fort Sumter,

¹ 2 Curtis's *Buchanan*, 528.

² Statement of Mr. F. W. Seward to the author.

³ 3 Nicolay and Hay, 444; 2 Seward, 521.

⁴ Gilmer to Seward, March 27th, Seward MSS.

⁵ The striking contrast between this question and the promise in the inaugural address "to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the government," seems to have been overlooked.

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of course I should answer that it would be both unwise and inhuman not to attempt it. But the facts of the case are known to be that the attempt must be made with the employment of a military and marine force which would provoke combat and probably initiate a civil war, which the government of the United States would be committed to maintain through all changes to some definite conclusion."

As a citizen, he considered the Union necessary; as a public official, he believed that it must be maintained at all hazards. Yet next to disunion he regarded "civil war as the most disastrous and deplorable of national calamities." Therefore, he had studied how to save the Union without war. He felt confident that secession was based upon false reasoning and had been carried forward in the seven states by means of artificial excitement so as to overcome for the time the devotion to the Union, which he believed to be a "profound and permanent national sentiment," "even in South Carolina." Yet he was sure that this sentiment

"could, if encouraged, be ultimately relied upon to rally the people of the seceding states to reverse, upon due deliberation, all the popular acts of legislatures and conventions by which they were hastily and violently committed to disunion.

"The policy of the time, therefore, has seemed to me to consist in conciliation, which should deny to disunionists any new provocation or apparent offence, while it would enable the Unionists in the slave states to maintain with truth and with effect that the alarms and apprehensions put forth by the disunionists are groundless and false.

"I have not been ignorant of the objections that the administration was elected through the activity of the Republican party; that it must continue to deserve and retain the confidence of that party; while conciliation toward the slave states tends to demoralize the Republican party itself, on which party the main responsibility of maintaining the Union must rest.

"But it has seemed to me a sufficient answer—first, that

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the administration could not demoralize the Republican party without making some sacrifice of its essential principles, while no such sacrifice is necessary, or is anywhere authoritatively proposed; and secondly, if it be indeed true that pacification is necessary to prevent dismemberment of the Union and civil war, or either of them, no patriot and lover of humanity could hesitate to surrender party for the higher interests of country and humanity.

"Partly by design, partly by chance, this policy has been hitherto pursued by the late administration of the Federal government, and by the Republican party in its corporate action. It is by this policy, thus pursued, I think, that the progress of dismemberment has been arrested after the seven Gulf states had seceded, and the border states yet remain, although they do so uneasily, in the Union.

"It is to a perseverance in this policy for a short time longer that I look as the only peaceful means of assuring the continuance of Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, and Arkansas, or most of those states in the Union. It is through their good and patriotic offices that I look to see the Union sentiment revived and brought once more into activity in the seceding states, and through this agency those states themselves returning into the Union."

"The fact, then, is that while the people of the border states desire to be loyal, they are at the same time sadly, though temporarily, demoralized by a sympathy for the slave states, which makes them forget their loyalty whenever there are any grounds for apprehending that the Federal government will resort to military coercion against the seceding states, *even though such coercion should be necessary to maintain the authority, or even the integrity, of the Union.*¹ This sympathy is unreasonable, unwise, and dangerous, and therefore cannot, if left undisturbed, be permanent. It can be banished, however, only in one way, and that is by giving time for it to wear out, and for reason to resume its sway. Time will do this, if it be not hindered by new alarms and provocations."

"The question submitted to us, then, practically is: Supposing it to be possible to reinforce and supply Fort Sumter.

¹ Not italicized in the original.

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is it wise now to attempt it, instead of withdrawing the garrison?

"The most that could be done by any means now in our hands would be to throw two hundred and fifty to four hundred men into the garrison, with provisions for supplying it five or six months. In this active and enlightened country, in this season of excitement, with a daily press, daily mails, and an incessantly operating telegraph, the design to reinforce and supply the garrison must become known to the opposite party at Charleston as soon at least as preparation for it should begin. The garrison would then almost certainly fall by assault before the expedition could reach the harbor of Charleston. But supposing the secret kept, the expedition must engage in conflict on entering the harbor of Charleston; suppose it to be overpowered and destroyed, is that new outrage to be avenged, or are we then to return to our attitude of immobility? Should we be allowed to do so? Moreover, in that event, what becomes of the garrison?

"I suppose the expedition successful. We have then a garrison in Fort Sumter that can defy assault for six months. What is it to do then? Is it to make war by opening its batteries and attempting to demolish the defences of the Carolinians? Can it demolish them if it tries? If it cannot, what is the advantage we shall have gained? If it can, how will it serve to check or prevent disunion?

"In either case, it seems to me that we will have inaugurated a civil war by our own act, without an adequate object, after which reunion will be hopeless, at least under this administration, or in any other way than by a popular disavowal both of the war and of the administration which unnecessarily commenced it. Fraternity is the element of union; war is the very element of disunion. Fraternity, if practised by this administration, will rescue the Union from all its dangers. If this administration, on the other hand, take up the sword, then an opposite party will offer the olive branch, and will, as it ought, profit by the restoration of peace and union."

... "I would not provoke war in any way *now*. I would resort to force to protect the collection of revenue, because that is a necessary as well as legitimate public object. Even then it should only be a naval force that I would employ for that necessary purpose, while *I would defer military action on land until a case should arise where we would hold*

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*the defensive.*¹ In that case we should have the spirit of the country and the approval of mankind on our side. In the other, we should peril peace and union, because we had not the courage to practise prudence and moderation at the cost of temporary misapprehension. If this counsel seem to be impassive and even unpatriotic, I console myself by the reflection that it is such as Chatham gave to his country under circumstances not widely different."²

He still left unexplained the method and influences by which the slave states hesitating whether to sympathize with the Confederacy or with the Federal government were to be kept within their normal spheres. He was even more vague as to the manner in which the resolute and ambitious new government was to be dealt with and finally dissolved. Yet, the logic of his answer to Lincoln's question, his opinions expressed at different times, the declared aims of those who were known to be his allies and confidants, and the plans of southern Unionists with whom he was in close communication furnish a clear outline of the policy by which he expected to avert civil war and disunion.

As has been noticed, the first step was an attempt to abolish party lines and to unite those who believed the preservation of the Union the most important consideration. This put in the background the aims of the radical Republicans, and tended to soothe the fears of a majority of the voters of the South outside the cotton states, so that they refused to rush precipitately into secession. North Carolina, Tennessee, Arkansas, and all the border slave states had shown at least a temporary preference for the old government. It was believed in many quarters that the Confederacy could not long continue unless she should win over several more states. In the contest to gain these middle states the Confederacy had a great

¹ Not italicized in the original.

² 5 Works, 606 ff.

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advantage, but it was not so evident then as it is now. "Force," "coercion," "subjugation," were words of such frightful omen to most Southerners that little distinction was made in their meanings. Many Northerners, like Seward, tried to eliminate these words from all discussions, knowing how they would be used by secessionists. After the inauguration, the first aim was to strengthen the southern Unionists and make allies of them. Because the reprovisioning or the reinforcement of forts would be regarded as positive evidence of an intention to coerce the states, it must be avoided as much as coercion itself. The *New York Times* of March 21st said that the true policy of the administration was "unquestionably that of masterly inactivity"; that the object was "the conversion of the southern people from their secessionism." "Force, as a means of restoring the Union, or of permanently preserving it, is out of the question." Seward thought that the best evidence of the peaceful intentions of the administration would be the withdrawal of the troops from Fort Sumter. As a result it was expected that several of the loyal slave states would soon take a positive stand against secession. Then their influence would be felt by neighboring states, and, ultimately, by the Confederacy.¹ As late as April 10th, he expressed great confidence that a constitutional convention would remove the difficulties if all else should fail.²

Virginia, still the most important point, was to be used as the thin edge of the wedge. It was rumored that

¹ This idea is vaguely expressed in the opinion of March 15th. "He [Seward] could give me no good reason for supposing it, but he seemed to be quite convinced that, as soon as the states of Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri rejected the appeals of the secessionists, as he has positive information they will reject them, the disintegration of the new-born Confederacy will begin."—"Diary of a Public Man," March 7th, 129 *North American Review*, 489.

² *Diplomatic Correspondence*, 1861, 74, 75.

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Seward thought of going to Richmond to help forward the cause, for the state convention was still in session there.¹ But he sent a special agent, and then recommended to Lincoln that George W. Summers, the ablest of the Unionists there, should be made a Judge of the Supreme Court.² About the same time he told an editor of the *Washington National Intelligencer* that the troops would be withdrawn from Sumter, and he requested him to state the fact to Summers.³

A few days later Summers wrote: "The [report of the] removal from Sumter acted like a charm—it gave us great strength. A reaction is now going on in the state. The outside pressure has greatly subsided." It was then supposed that a convention of the loyal slave states would be called at Frankfort or Nashville,⁴ and that the conditions of remaining in the Union would there be formulated and subsequently brought to the consideration of the other states.⁵ Seward expected that a national convention would soon follow, where an agreement would be reached by all the loyal states.⁶ The

¹ *New York Times*, March 8th.

² 8 Nicolay and Hay, 423.

³ 29 *New York Nation*, 383, 384. The intermediary was the late J. C. Welling, subsequently president of Columbian University.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Summers's speech of March 11th, in the Virginia convention. *Semi-Weekly Richmond Enquirer*, March 25th.

⁶ The "Diary," etc., of March 12th, records another interview with Seward. "He has news from Richmond, and I understood him from Mr. Summers, that the prospect of defeating the secessionists in the convention brightens all the time, and that Virginia, after disposing finally of the importunities of the southern states, will take the initiative for a great national convention. Of this he feels as confident as of the complete overthrow of the schemes of the fire-eaters by the quiet evacuation of Fort Sumter, which cannot now be long delayed." . . .

"He is hopeful of the success of the convention plan if we can but get the better of our own mischief-makers here, who are much more dangerous to us, he thinks—and I agree with him—than the people at Montgomery."—129 *North American Review*, 495.

The *Evening Journal* of March 22d said: "In proposing a national

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New York *Times*, which was the frankest exponent of this policy, urged editorially, March 21st, that the efforts of the Union men ought to be recognized, that documents explaining the true position of the administration should be scattered throughout the South, and that the patronage, influence, and power of the government should be used to build up a Union party in every southern state. These were exactly the lines on which Seward was working.¹

To what extent was the sovereignty of the United States to be suspended in the Confederacy during the practice of this "Fabian policy, which concedes nothing, yet which employs no force in support of resisted Federal authority?"² It was here that optimistic theories and negotiations had to give way to facts and practical administration. Excepting some phases of the purely military question, all the considerations that Seward had urged for the evacuation of Fort Sumter applied with nearly equal force to Fort Pickens. Even from a military point of view, the difference, which was chiefly one of time and degree, would disappear with the carrying out of Seward's plan. His method of dealing with secession was surprisingly like Buchanan's.³

convention of the states, Governor Seward, as on many former occasions, saw farther and more clearly into the future than his congressional associates, most of whom repudiated the suggestion. . . . That sentiment is now tuning up to the idea. Some states have met it with their approval. Our own will do so. We may look forward, therefore, to a period when, passion subsiding, irritation soothed, and the popular mind tranquillized, wholesome results may flow from the deliberation of a national council."

¹ A letter from Samuel Hooper, dated Boston, February 18, 1861, showed that on Seward's suggestion he had collected one thousand dollars for the distribution of documents in the border slave states.—Seward MSS.

² *Tribune*, March 27, 1861.

³ See the paragraph beginning "Partly by design," in the opinion of March 15th; also 129 *North American Review*, 127, 128, 133, 489.

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The attitude of each meant a waiving of sovereign rights, a voluntary paralysis in administration, and the acceptance of whatever might be necessary to avoid war. The prejudices and fears of the Southerners must be allowed to wear off in quiet, although at the expense of not using the force "necessary to maintain the authority, or even the integrity of the Union," as he indicated on March 15th. Of course he expected that a reaction would be brought about in some manner before "the integrity of the Union" was destroyed.

Of the six other members of the Cabinet, Postmaster-General Blair alone positively favored provisioning Sumter, on the ground that evacuation would demoralize northern Unionists and encourage southern secessionists, while even defeat would unite and inspire the North.¹ Chase, the Secretary of the Treasury, answered Lincoln's question affirmatively, but said that he would advise against trying to provision Sumter, "if the attempt will so inflame civil war as to involve an immediate necessity for the enlistment of armies and the expenditure of millions." The Secretary of War, Simon Cameron, considered the question in its military aspects, and, leaning upon the adverse opinions of the army officers, he opposed the attempt to relieve the fort. Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy, answered in the negative, after a review of both the military and the political considerations. Caleb B. Smith, the Secretary of the Interior, supported Seward in his view of the difficulty of the undertaking and of the slight advantage of it, even if successful. He thought that it would cause the administration to appear to take the aggressive and to begin a civil war. To Attorney-General Bates the question was one of expediency merely, and his opinion as to the military inutility and the political danger of making the at-

¹ 2 Lincoln's *Works*, 14-22, gives the various opinions.

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tempt still more closely resembled Seward's. Much like Seward, also, he said: "A reaction has already begun [in the seceding states], and if encouraged by wise, moderate, and firm measures on the part of the government, I persuade myself that the nation will be restored to its integrity without the effusion of blood." But, unlike all others on his side, he urged that, as a counter-balance to the loss of Sumter, "the more southern forts, Pickens, Key West, etc., should, without delay, be put in condition of easy defence against all assailants; and that the whole coast, from South Carolina to Texas, should be as well guarded as the power of the navy will enable us."

The replies showed that Seward's policy—so called because he was its exponent, if not its author—had won support. Blair still persistently advocated energetic measures, as was expected by all who knew him. Chase seemed to be less firm, although it was well known that a large majority of the Republicans in the Senate, then in executive session, sympathized with him in opposition to the Secretary of State. Backed by the highest military opinion, by the Attorney-General, by the Secretaries of War, the Navy, and the Interior, Seward's confidence was strengthened.

Lincoln took the manuscript opinions and—continued to be non-committal. On the same day, Seward wrote home: "This President proposes to do all his own work." Not until the 18th did Lincoln call upon Bates, Chase, and Welles for opinions and facts that indicated that he was considering the question of using a naval force to collect custom duties or to blockade ports in the Confederacy.¹ About the same time Captain Fox was sent to Charleston so that he could better judge as to the practicability of his plan of relieving Sumter. A few

¹ 2 Lincoln's *Works*, 24, 25.

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days later Lincoln requested one of his old Illinois friends, S. A. Hurlbut, to visit the same city and report if there was a suppressed Union sentiment there, as Seward had maintained. Ward H. Lamon, once a law-partner and for many years an intimate friend of the President, accompanied Hurlbut. Major Anderson's opinion was stronger than ever against attempting to provision Sumter, while Fox became more convinced of the feasibility of providing relief. Hurlbut reported that J. L. Petigru, a distinguished lawyer, was the only man in Charleston that continued to express adherence to the Union, that there was "positively nothing to appeal to." Lamon wrote to Seward that he was "satisfied of the policy and propriety of immediately evacuating Fort Sumter."¹

Meantime a collateral question had arisen. On February 27th, Martin J. Crawford, John Forsyth, and A. B. Roman had been appointed commissioners of the Confederacy to the United States. Their chief task was to obtain a recognition of the independence of their government. In case the President of the United States should refuse to receive them or open negotiations, but should be willing to refer the subject to the Senate, they were instructed to accede. Or if he should propose to withhold a reply to their communication until Congress should assemble and pronounce a decision in the premises, they were to oppose no obstacle, "provided, in either case, you receive from the President of the United

¹ "I talked with Major Anderson privately for an hour and a half. He and his men are in fine spirits, but as to their spirits, I am satisfied from their very appearance that they would be buoyant if they knew there would be a necessity for blowing up the fort in the next half-hour—which they would do before they would surrender it.

"From the best lights that I can judge from, after casting around, *I am satisfied of the policy and propriety of immediately evacuating Fort Sumter.*"—Charleston, March 25th. Seward MSS.

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States assurances, which to you will seem sufficient, that the existing peaceful status as between the two countries shall be rigidly maintained, and that no attempt shall be made, under any pretext whatever, by the Government of the United States, to exercise any jurisdiction, whether civil or military, within the limits of the Confederacy."¹ It was of the greatest importance that they should secure the maintenance of the existing status pending negotiations.² Crawford reached Washington before Buchanan had left the White House, but too late to begin any negotiations with him.

Within a few hours after Lincoln's inauguration Samuel Ward informed Seward that Crawford would immediately apply for a reception; that if he should go back unacknowledged as commissioner, President Davis could not hold the people from attacking the forts; that "Gwin and Hunter think the question had best be referred to the Senate. They say it is a risk you must take." Then he speculated on how the Senate would vote, and added that Dr. Gwin desired to see Seward at Ward's house the following day.³ Seward met Gwin at least once during the next few days, and assured him of the determination of the administration to settle the questions between the two governments in an amicable manner.⁴

On March 6th Crawford sent Toombs a long despatch describing what he understood to be Seward's ideas and plans.⁵ It had been arranged that Seward should let

¹ These conditions will be referred to later.

² Instructions of the Confederate Secretary of State, Robert Toombs, to the commissioners, February 27, 1861. The original records of this commission are in the Treasury Department.

³ See Appendix K.

⁴ 18 *Overland Monthly*, 2d series, 469.

⁵ "The President himself is really not aware of the condition of the country, and his Secretaries of State and War are to open the difficulties and dangers to him in Cabinet meeting to-day." . . .

"The construction which he [Seward] attempts to put upon the inaugural is, that it only follows the language of every President from

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him know that afternoon when and in what manner the subject-matter of the mission should be brought forward and submitted for the consideration of the President and Cabinet. On the 8th the commissioners reported that they had availed themselves of the services of "a late distinguished Senator of the United States"—undoubtedly Gwin—to establish an understanding with the Secretary. They were confident that Seward was eager for delay.¹ They could "travel the same path" with

Washington down, wherein Mr. Lincoln pledges himself to 'the execution of the laws,' and states that it was necessary to prevent utter ruin to the party and the administration itself. Touching the collection of the revenues, he had an eye more to the ports outside than inside the Confederate States, and expresses apprehension if he had not declared his purpose in that regard that New York and San Francisco might at any time for any reason refuse to pay over the customs.

"As to the words 'hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the government,' he says that, with all else in the document, is to be considered in connection with the qualification wherein the President says, 'Doing this I deem it to be only a simple duty on my part; and I shall perform it so far as practicable, unless my rightful masters the American people shall withhold the requisite means, or in some authoritative manner direct the contrary,' which in effect, as well as purpose, was to submit the question to the judgment of the country in some satisfactory form." . . .

. . . "To cover the whole ground of his policy, it is to keep persons from without from engaging in this contest, and as rapidly as possible disaffect our own population to the point of war upon our government, and then, with small forces of Federal troops and meagre moneyed appropriations from the U. S. Treasury, 'conquer a peace.'" In advancing this policy the party in power was to drop the name Republican, ignore the word slavery, and merge everything into the Union cause and a Union party.

¹ They represented Seward as follows: "The tenor of his language is to this effect: I have built up the Republican party; I have brought it to triumph; but its advent to power is accompanied by great difficulties and perils. I must save the party and save the government in its hands. To do this, war must be averted; the negro question must be dropped; the 'irrepressible conflict' ignored; and a Union party to embrace the border slave states inaugurated. I have already whipped Mason and Hunter in their own state. I must crush out Davis and Toombs and their colleagues in sedition in

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him up to "the point of fixing peace as the policy of the Lincoln government." Until pacific negotiations should be reached, it was "unimportant what may be his subsequent hopes and plans."

Their "agent" was instructed to represent it as his opinion that the commissioners were "ready to accept war," and could not admit of delay while the flag of the United States was flying over Forts Sumter and Pickens and while ships and troops seemed to be preparing for hostilities, unless the most reliable guaranty should be received. It was reported that Seward replied that the administration could not then act upon so important a question; for it was "besieged by applicants," "surrounded by all the difficulties and confusion incident to the first days of a new government," and the pressure of hordes of the most radical Republicans gave an advantage to his opponents in the party. Therefore, if compelled to take a stand then, he could not answer for the result. It required no great cleverness on the part of the commissioners to see that their best chance lay in playing boldly when Seward was hampered and fearful. So, by their direction, as they complacently reported, the agent told Seward, much as Ward had done a few days before, that "without proper assurances we [the commission] should be bound to precipitate the issue at once upon the administration and force it to define its policy. Would he give such assurances? It was finally agreed that the agent should bring to Mr. Seward a memorandum stating the terms upon which we would consent to, and stipulate for, a brief respite."¹

Accordingly, the agent called at the Department of their respective states. Saving the border states to the Union by moderation and justice, the people of the cotton states, unwillingly led into secession, will rebel against their leaders, and reconstruction will follow."

¹ Commissioners to Toombs, March 8th.

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State at nine o'clock on the morning of the 8th with the memorandum. It stated that the commissioners would agree to postpone the consideration of the subject of their mission for a period not exceeding twenty days, provided that the existing military status should be preserved in every respect.¹ The commissioners imagined that Seward would soon be in their trap; for, as they wrote to Toombs, "the signing of the mutual agreement and stipulations contained in the memorandum would be a virtual recognition of us as the representatives of a power entitled to be treated with by this government."² Unfortunately for them, the Secretary was not at the Department, but at home, and too ill to transact any business. Here this intermediary dropped out.

Seward soon recovered, and Senator Hunter became the go-between.³ The commissioners represented to their

¹ This referred to Fort Pickens as much as to Fort Sumter.

² *Ibid.*; Crawford, 828.

³ Gwin was the only "late distinguished Senator of the United States" with whom Seward is known to have had dealings of this character, and Gwin's recollections (18 *Overland Monthly*, 469) show that he quit the negotiations at exactly the point the "agent" did—i. e., when Seward's illness interfered, which was on the 8th. Crawford (*Genesis*, etc., 822) and Rhodes (vol. iii., p. 828) erroneously speak of Hunter as if he were the intermediary in the effort to have Seward agree to the memorandum. These sentences from the commissioners' despatch of March 13th should have precluded such an inference: "At the date of our last communication we were awaiting the convalescence of Mr. Seward. He was at the State Department on Monday (yesterday), when we proposed to place in his hands the memorandum of terms of delay, a copy of which has been transmitted to you. The gentleman who was to carry it had, however, left the city; and feeling unwilling to lose time in waiting for him, we availed ourselves of the kind consent of Senator Hunter, of Virginia, to see Mr. Seward and learn if he would consent to an informal interview with us."

It is not strange that Gwin was inaccurate as to the date and some other minor features. Many years after the incident occurred he saw a reference in Jefferson Davis's *Confederate Government* to a call that "a distinguished Senator" made March 11th on Seward in behalf of

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government that Seward was "perceptibly embarrassed and uneasy" when Hunter appeared at the Department of State, March 11th; for the Secretary "seemed to apprehend the formal presentation of the issue we have in charge." Because it was believed that the evacuation of Sumter was certain, the commissioners concluded to drop the demand for the preservation of the military status and to insist on an informal interview. In reply, Seward said that before he could consent, he would have to consult the President, and that he would give Hunter an answer the next day.¹ As agreed, he wrote, March 12th: "It will not be in my power to receive the gentlemen of whom we spoke yesterday. You will please explain to them that this decision proceeds solely on public grounds, and not from any want of personal respect."² Again Confederate hopes were blasted.

The commissioners seem to have concluded that Seward was not to be caught with a pin-hook, and that

the commissioners, and supposed the reference was to himself, for he had never heard of Hunter's services. See 18 *Overland Monthly*, 465.

¹ Commissioners to Toombs, March 12th.

² This entry of March 7th, in the "Diary of a Public Man," says of Seward: "He seemed inclined to think that a mode might be found of receiving them and negotiating with them, without in any way committing the government to a recognition of the government which they assume to represent.

"*I found it difficult, indeed I may say impossible, to make him admit the hopelessness of looking for such a thing*—[not italicized in the original]—but I told him frankly that I saw no earthly reason why he should not informally and in a private way obtain from these gentlemen—all of them, as he knew, honorable and very intelligent men—some practical light on the way out of all this gathering perplexity, if, indeed, they have any such practical light to give. He then gave me to understand that this was exactly what he had done and meant to do, and he repeated his conviction that the evacuation of Fort Sumter would clear the way for a practical understanding out of which an immediate tranquillization of the country must come, and in the not distant future a return of all the seceding states to their allegiance."—129 *North American Review*, 490.

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their dignity demanded a formal announcement of their presence in Washington and a request for an official audience, so as to state the object of their mission. Such a communication was left at the Department of State on March 13th, with the statement that an answer would be called for on the next day. When the secretary of the commission came for the answer, he was told that time had not been found to prepare it, but that its prompt delivery at the hotel of the commissioners might be relied on. As it did not come, the secretary went to the department, on the 15th, to learn the cause of the delay. He was told that a reply was then preparing.¹

The immediate rejection of the request of the commissioners seemed inevitable. Whenever it should come, they would have to withdraw. Then the channel of peaceful communication between the two governments would close and warlike demonstrations must soon follow. This would mark the end and utter failure of Seward's policy. Unless he could control the patience of the commissioners it would be impossible for him to carry out his plans. This prospect must have been most painful. In his whole public career there was nothing to which he had clung so fondly. He had a great reputation as a political seer, and his pride did not lag behind his reputation.

While still distressed by the dilemma, on March 15th, Justice Nelson, of the United States Supreme Court, laid before him some opinions to the effect that there were serious constitutional objections to the employment of coercive measures. Shortly afterward Nelson met his colleague, Justice John A. Campbell, and took him to Seward, hoping that he might help to overcome the immediate difficulties. Twelve years later Campbell described what occurred at the department: the

¹ Commissioners to Toombs, March 22d.

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Justices urged Seward to receive the commissioners; Seward regretted his inability to do so, and asked them to see Lincoln, Bates, and Blair; he was confident that Jefferson Davis would not have sent the commissioners if he had known the true state of affairs; and he declared further that the evacuation of Sumter was as much as the administration could bear at one time. Campbell saw the force of the suggestion as to Sumter. Seward assured him, when he spoke of writing to Davis and of speaking to the commissioners, that Sumter would be evacuated before a letter could reach Montgomery, and that no action was contemplated as to the forts in the Gulf of Mexico.¹

Accordingly, Campbell immediately reported to the commissioners Seward's desire to preserve the peace, and left with them a written statement expressing "perfect confidence" that Sumter would be "evacuated in the next five days"; "that no measure changing the existing status of things prejudicially to the Southern Confederate States is at present contemplated"; that an immediate demand for an answer to their communication would "be productive of evil and not of good"; and he asked for a delay of ten days until the effect of the evacuation of Fort Sumter could be ascertained.² Of course the commissioners understood that Campbell obtained his information from Seward; in fact, all concerned must have known that there was no other source for such assurances.

Heretofore it has sometimes been claimed that Campbell said more to the commissioners than he was authorized to do, and that Seward knew nothing about it. There is no basis for the claim. Only a few hours after Campbell, who was acting at Seward's request, received his instructions, he reported that he had told Crawford

¹ Crawford, 827, 828.

² Crawford, 830.

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"that no measure changing the existing status of things prejudicially to the Confederate States is at present contemplated by the administration."¹ It was thoroughly understood on all sides that the Confederacy would violently resist any attempt to reinforce United States troops at any point within the claimed boundary of the seven seceded states. Notwithstanding Scott's order of the 12th to reinforce Fort Pickens, this assurance covered that fort as much as Fort Sumter or any others.

All parties concerned liked the new arrangement; so this peculiar intercourse continued. On March 16th Campbell, understanding Seward's anxiety about an answer to the note of the commissioners, followed up his

¹ "I saw Judge Crawford, after leaving you to-day," Campbell wrote to Seward, March 15, 1861, "and communicated to him that I had entire confidence that Fort Sumter would be evacuated in five days, and that no measure changing the existing status of things prejudicially to the Confederate States is at present contemplated by the administration.

"That these conclusions imposed great responsibility upon the administration, and that this responsibility would be injuriously increased by any demand for an answer to the communication of the commissioners of the Confederate States, and insisted that an answer should not be requested until the effect of the evacuation of Fort Sumter on the public mind should be ascertained, and, at all events, that nothing be done for ten days. Judge Crawford agreed to my proposal, but said Mr. Forsyth's concurrence was necessary. Mr. F. could not be found, and it was agreed that as soon as he could be consulted that Judge C. would address me a note as to the result.

"I have not yet heard from him.

"I think that you need not concern yourself to make an answer for the present. As soon as I hear from the commissioners, I will inform you.

"Judge C. preferred to conduct the correspondence with General Davis, and I shall not (probably) write to the latter on the subject. I cautioned Judge C. not to speak of our intercourse, and not to express any surmise as to the source from which my assurances were derived. I did not mention any name to him."—Seward MSS.

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report to Seward with these lines: "The commissioners have sent a telegram to Montgomery in order to obtain permission to do as desired. An answer will, probably, be received to-day. Nothing will be expected from you to-day on their part."¹ As anticipated, Toombs telegraphed the commissioners to "wait a reasonable time and then ask instructions."

At the expiration of the five days within which Sumter was to be evacuated, Campbell was requested to make inquiries about the delay. On March 21st he conferred with Seward and again gave the commissioners a written statement that his "confidence" was "unabated" as to the facts stated on March 15th; 2d, that no prejudicial movement to the South is contemplated as respects Fort Pickens. I shall be able to speak positively to-morrow afternoon."² After a long consultation with Seward, on March 22d, Campbell made a third record of his "unabated confidence" that there was no ground for distrust as to Sumter, and that the condition of things at Fort Pickens was not to be altered prejudicially to the Confederacy. He advised against making any demands upon the United States, and said he should have knowledge of any change in the existing status. His memorandum was shown to Seward before it was delivered: therefore Fort Pickens was expressly covered by the pledge.³ Justice Nelson was present at each of the three interviews; Campbell showed the statements to him and obtained his sanction before giving them to the commissioners. Campbell published these

¹ Seward MSS.

² Campbell's statement, printed in Crawford, 881. Campbell, as well as the commissioners, seems to have become somewhat suspicious, for he took Justice Nelson with him for his "protection against the treachery of Secretary Seward and such other members of the Cabinet as he sees," as Toombs was informed.—Commissioners to Toombs, March 22d.

³ Crawford, 881, 882.

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facts only a few weeks later.¹ Nelson's loyalty would have made it morally obligatory to deny Campell's account if it had not been correct.

On March 24th the Russian Minister called upon commissioner Roman and reported the following as the substance of a conversation with Seward the day before: no coercion or blockade, the Secretary had said, would be attempted; the seceding states would be allowed to collect the duties at their custom-houses, but the expense of their post-offices ought to be paid out of this revenue; he hoped those states, if allowed to act quietly, would retrace their steps, and return to the Union, but if they persisted they should be permitted to depart in peace; he had to fight the ultra-Republicans, but he was gaining ground and his policy would finally prevail. Could not an informal meeting with Roman be arranged for him at the Russian legation? Seward and the Minister agreed that taking a cup of tea there two evenings later would furnish the best opportunity. Roman gladly accepted the suggestion.² The next morning Seward sent his regrets; and subsequently told the Minister that, after much reflection, he had declined, because he was afraid that the meeting might become known to the newspapers. The commissioners believed that it was because Seward was apprehensive of Horace Greeley, who had just arrived in Washington.³ They advised that the strongest possible force should be presented at Fort Pickens, so that there would be an "*excuse*" for its evacuation. They did not believe that the forts would be reinforced at the risk of a conflict. But it was still a question whether the administration was more afraid of the Confederate States or of the radical Republicans.⁴

¹ McPherson's *Rebellion*, 110.

² Roman to Toombs, March 25th. See note to p. 185 *post*.

³ Commissioners to Toombs, March 26th.

⁴ *Ibid*.

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Until the last days of March, Seward's influence over the administration seemed to be undisturbed. Although Lincoln had not adopted his recommendations, he so carefully avoided direct antagonism to them that Seward and his friends—as well as Jefferson Davis¹—continued to believe that they would prevail. What did the status at this time—near the end of March—indicate as to the efficiency of Seward's plan and methods if they should be allowed full sway? A fair point from which to judge them should be gained by a careful examination of these three questions:

1. How did the Confederates regard and expect to meet his policy?

2. What conditions did the southern Unionists put upon its acceptance?

3. What did Seward's closest friends, and other Republicans, think of the outlook?

1. With profound complacency the Confederates regarded Seward as their cat's-paw. "I have felt it my duty under instructions from your department, as well as from my best judgment," Crawford wrote to Toombs, March 6th, "to adopt and support Mr. Seward's policy, upon condition, however, that the present status is to be rigidly maintained. His reasons and my own, it is proper to say, are as wide apart as the poles: he is fully persuaded that peace will bring about a reconstruction of the Union, whilst I feel confident that it will build up and cement our confederacy and put us beyond the reach either of his arms or of his diplomacy." "It is well that he should indulge in dreams which we know are not to be realized," Forsyth and Crawford complacently said, two days later. Because the Confederates were living under their own laws and were levying tribute upon the North, the commissioners felt that a continu-

¹ Toombs to commissioners, April 2d.

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ance of quiet would be most conducive to a solidification of their government and to preparation for any emergency; while it would tend to give them character, power, and influence abroad.' The evacuation of Forts Sumter and Pickens would be *pro tanto* a recognition of independence. Obtaining Fort Pickens might be a work of time. "Still, invest the latter as Sumter was and it soon becomes a necessity." Crawford pointed out that, by procuring from Seward a pledge not to change the status, the Confederate States had won a great advantage, for they "were not bound in any way whatever to observe the same course toward it"—the United States. "We think, then, that the policy of 'masterly inactivity,' on our part, was wise in every particular."¹ As late as April 2d, the Confederate Secretary of State wrote to the commissioners: "It is a matter of no importance to us what motives may induce the adoption of Mr. Seward's policy by his government. We are satisfied that it will redound to our advantage, and, therefore, care little for Mr. Seward's calculations as to its future effect upon the Confederate States." At the same time Toombs instructed the commissioners not to agree to maintain the present status except upon the condition that the United States troops should be withdrawn from both Sumter and Pickens. From the beginning these forts were linked together for war or peace.² This soon became apparent.

The commissioners had asked their government if during negotiations it would be practicable to collect the same duties as were required by the laws of the United States rather than by those of the Confederacy. March

¹ Commissioners, March 26th.

² Crawford to Toombs, April 1st.

³ On February 15th, a resolution of the Confederate Congress expressed the opinion "that immediate steps should be taken to obtain possession of Forts Sumter and Pickens, by the authority of this government, either by negotiations or force, as early as practicable."—

¹ *War Records*, 258.

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14th, Toombs answered: "The government of the Confederate States can never agree that negotiations shall be made dependent on the non-execution of our own laws. . . . Not even to avert war can we ever consent to suspend the operation of the laws which we are bound to execute." In a separate despatch of March 29th Roman expressed hopes that Seward would, "before long, return to his idea of having an informal interview with us, and that some plan, not for a final treaty of peace—he dares not go so far—but for a truce or cessation of hostilities, perhaps until the meeting of the next Congress, may be agreed upon."

If the Confederates understood the needs of their own government, Seward's expectations were to be disappointed—unless he had some plan in reserve.

2. John A. Gilmer, of North Carolina, and George W. Summers, of Virginia, probably stood closer to Seward than any other Southerners not Republicans. Gilmer indicated his belief that, in order to save the Unionists in the southern states from being "swept away in a torrent of madness," it would be necessary to withdraw the troops from all the fortifications in the Confederacy and leave the revenue laws unenforced, so as to avoid a resort to arms.¹ He thought that most of the states could be won back in less than two years. Likewise Judge Summers, in his great Union speech before the Virginia convention, maintained that there was neither cause nor power to retake the lost forts; that there was no way for the United States to collect the customs in the seceded states; that we were "bound to accept secession as an existing fact," for the seven states had "formed a new confederacy" and were "now performing the functions of an independent government."

¹ For Gilmer's letters to Seward, see Appendix L.

² At the same time he said he would regard that statesman as "narrow and unphilosophical" who should consider the action of these

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Moreover, the report of the committee on Federal relations had already indicated that more than half the members of the convention were practically defensive allies of the Confederacy.¹ Throughout March those who called themselves Unionists or conservatives held the immediate secessionists in check; but it was the task of Sisyphus, and every day the burden grew heavier. Not even one hint has been found, in the many letters they wrote to Seward, that they would remain loyal if the Confederacy should be resisted. Lincoln's sarcastic exclamation—"Yes! your Virginia people are good Unionists, but it is always with an *if*!"—was a perfect characterization of their attitude. And, as a matter of fact, those whom Lincoln so accurately called Seward and Weed's "white crows" soon became Confederates. Yet Seward expected such broken reeds to be the southern pillars of the Union!

3. The commissioners had frequently reported that the peace party at the North was growing. An editorial article in the *New York Times* of March 21st said that "there is a growing sentiment throughout the North in favor of letting the Gulf States go." Every week of quiet strengthened conservatives and abolitionists in the belief that it would be better to say, "Wayward sisters, depart in peace," than to risk the perils of a civil war. Neither the *Times* nor the *Evening Journal* accepted this view, but both papers suggested that an extra session of Congress would be a prerequisite of adopting a policy

states as insurrectionary. He announced that the news received from Washington that morning [presumably from Seward *per* Welling] removed all doubt about a pacific policy and the evacuation of Sumter. "These states must be left to time, to their experiment, to negotiation, to entreaty, to sisterly kindness."—Speech of March 11, 1861, *Semi-Weekly Richmond Enquirer*, March 25th.

¹ *American Annual Cyclopadia*, 1861, 732-34.

² *Southern Historical Papers*, 448.

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of active resistance to secession.¹ Gilmer urged Seward, March 12th, to draw up a proclamation throwing upon Buchanan's administration the blame for the condition of affairs. To this Seward replied that the suggestions were "judicious."² There had been a very marked change of attitude since the previous winter, when the *Evening Journal* denounced Buchanan for not pursuing a vigorous policy. The almost free-trade tariff of the Confederacy had so demoralized importation at the North that the *Times* said, on March 30th: "With us it is no longer an abstract question—one of constitutional construction, or of reserved or delegated powers of the state or Federal government, but of material existence and moral position both at home and abroad." Douglas and most of the Democrats were known to be in favor of withdrawing the troops from both Sumter and Pickens, and recognizing as a fact what had taken place. The Republican Senators became more and more impatient, and Trumbull finally introduced a resolution declaring that the true way to preserve the Union was to enforce in all the states the laws of the Union.³

So, as yet there was no sign of the reflux wave that was expected to sweep back into the Union its dismembered parts: in fact, all the appearances indicated that Seward's plans, as far as announced, were wholly inadequate to save or restore the integrity of the nation.

¹ In a very significant editorial article on "Peaceful Secession," March 23d, the *Evening Journal* said that there should be no shedding of blood "by the general government, if it have not the needed force to carry on the war which the shedding of blood would initiate." As late as April 3d, a leading article in the *Times* said: "If he [the President] decides to enforce the laws, let him call Congress together and demand the means of doing it."

² See Appendix L, letter of April 11th.

³ *Globe*, 1860-61, 1519.

CHAPTER XXIX

SEWARD'S STRUGGLE FOR SUPREMACY

ON March 28th the Senate adjourned. This promised to relieve the administration from criticism in that quarter. The New York *Tribune* of that morning contained a sensational despatch dated the previous day in Washington, disclosing the fact that an order, which was Scott's, had been sent a fortnight before, to reinforce Fort Pickens with the four hundred troops on the *Brooklyn*. On this 28th of March, also, expired the twenty-day delay, to which the commissioners had been authorized to consent. By this time, too, the conclusions of Fox, Hurlbut, and Lamon had become known. Hence it was to be expected that the administration would soon publicly and definitively announce its policy. Late that evening Lincoln called the members of his Cabinet into consultation to inform them that General Scott had recommended that Fort Pickens as well as Fort Sumter should be evacuated. Lincoln showed considerable emotion in making the announcement. A painful silence followed, until Blair began to denounce Scott for "playing politician," and not acting as a general should in recommending the surrender of a fort that was regarded as impregnable. Those present understood that the remarks were aimed at Seward; and in after years both Blair and Welles recorded their belief that Scott was acting as Seward's decoy.¹

¹ 8 Nicolay and Hay, 394, 395; Welles, 58, 60, 65.

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Owing to the intimacy between Scott and Seward, it was assumed that Scott's recommendation was really Seward's, adroitly and tentatively made in this way in order to avoid hazarding the Secretary of State's influence with the administration.

A continuation of peace was the prerequisite of success for Seward's policy. His attitude toward Fort Sumter was such as to warrant the belief that he would also favor the evacuation of Fort Pickens, if necessary to the avoidance of an outbreak. Since 1839, when Scott was used by Weed and Seward as a means to defeat the nomination of Clay,¹ the man whom the country admired as a soldier and ridiculed as a politician had been repeatedly employed by the shrewd New York leaders as a means of carrying out their plans. In 1851-52 it was notorious that Scott was under the influence of their political mesmerism. During the winter of 1860-61 Seward and Scott were working like hand in glove. Gwin explained how Seward cited Scott's change of attitude as evidence of the strength of the policy of peace. The letter of March 3, 1861, to Seward was thoroughly unconventional and suspicious. It said that to "conquer the seceded states" would require an army of three hundred thousand men, two hundred and fifty million dollars, and a garrison of thirty-five thousand men to protect Washington. Within three days this opinion was quoted to Toombs by the commissioners, with the unimportant error of naming two hundred and fifty thousand men instead of three hundred thousand. The information was exactly in line with what Seward wanted the Confederate leaders at Montgomery to know. Welles subsequently asserted that when the Sumter question first came before the new Cabinet, Seward recommended that it be referred to Scott and

¹ 2 Schurz's *Clay*, 178.

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that his report be conclusive; and that Seward was, as yet, the only member who was aware that Scott had ceased to be a coercionist.¹ On the night of the 5th of March, Scott wrote for the President an opinion in entire harmony with Seward's ideas as to evacuating Sumter, and about the truce regarding Fort Pickens, entered into between the previous administration and some of the Confederates.² On March 6th Seward carried it away from the White House, before the President had examined it,³ and lent it to Stanton to be shown to Dix.⁴ On the 7th Lincoln requested Seward to return the paper so that he could study it. On March 5th, also, the President had requested General Scott to use "all possible vigilance for the maintenance of all the places." On the 9th he learned that nothing had been done toward reinforcing Fort Pickens; so, on the 11th, he put the order in writing.⁵ Welles has recorded that on that day Scott was very eager to have a naval vessel—because overland communications were unreliable—take an army officer who should be bearer of a despatch instructing Captain Vogdes, of the *Brooklyn*, lying off the harbor of Pensacola, to disembark his men so as to strengthen Fort Pickens; but that by the evening of the 12th Scott had lost his "earnest zeal" and had concluded that it would suffice to send merely a written order to Vogdes. So this was done on March 12th.⁶ It is hardly conceivable that Seward did not know of this order.

It has been noticed that on March 11th Seward encouraged Hunter to believe that he would receive the commissioners, and how, when he had to withdraw this encouragement, he soon gave Campbell assurances that there was no intention to change the status. This, with

¹ Welles, 59.

² 3 Nicolay and Hay, 378. MS. kindly shown by Colonel Nicolay.

³ 3 Lincoln's Works, 8.

⁴ 2 Curtis's *Buchanan*, 529.

⁵ 3 Nicolay and Hay, 393.

⁶ Welles, 59, 60.

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reassurances at different times, kept the Confederates unaggressive for two weeks. The *Tribune's* disclosure of March 28th about the order to reinforce Fort Pickens was undoubtedly known to Seward and Scott before the hour when Scott made his startling recommendation to evacuate that fort. Whether this recommendation was the result of fear lest the report of Scott's order might precipitate a war cannot be affirmed; it is only certain that the report did not precipitate hostilities because it was immediately discredited. It is certain that by the evening of March 28th Seward knew that his repeated assertions that there was no intention to change the status were incorrect. Therefore, he was bound either to tell Campbell the truth or so to counteract the possible effects of the order to reinforce Fort Pickens as to make the change of status not "prejudicial" to the Confederacy. This could be done by inducing the Federal government to evacuate Fort Pickens.

But there is still another mysterious thread. It should be remembered that Lincoln was calm in the belief that Vogdes had landed the troops according to Scott's order of the 12th and that Fort Pickens was absolutely safe. If Seward and Scott had no more information than others about affairs at Fort Pickens, they must have held the same opinion. As a matter of fact, the commandant had disobeyed Scott's instructions on the ground that they did not come from an official of sufficient rank to countermand the orders of Buchanan's Secretaries of War and of the Navy. But the administration did not hear of this until early in April. If Seward expected such an outcome, that would explain both why he had dared to give Campbell the assurances at different times since March 15th, and why he did not hasten to undeceive him and the commissioners after March 28th. But if Seward, without informing the President, knew what would happen, he was party to a

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plot. If there was such a plot, it was operated through Scott; and that would be ample reason for Scott and Seward to favor withdrawing the troops, and thereby closing the whole Pickens question as speedily as possible.

The Cabinet met again at noon, March 29th, and the President called once more for written opinions as to what should be done.¹ Chase, Blair, and Welles agreed that Fort Sumter should be relieved. Bates was non-committal; and Smith alone still stood with Seward for its evacuation. As to Fort Pickens, Welles and Bates were very urgent for reinforcement. Chase and Blair were so peremptory about relieving Sumter that they evidently considered it superfluous to be explicit about Pickens. Smith's advice plainly rested upon the presumption that the evacuation of Sumter would be compensated for by rigorous measures elsewhere. The logic of Seward's former attitude meant that Pickens should not be held at the cost of peace. It was well known that the Confederates had several days before begun to apply in Pensacola harbor the choking-off policy that had been so successful in the neighborhood of Charleston.² The reception some members of the Cabinet gave Scott's recommendation of the previous day was sufficient to warn any one that it would be suicidal to come out positively in favor of it now. With these thoughts in mind it is interesting to notice the exact wording of Seward's response of March 29th:

"*First.* The despatch of an expedition to supply or reinforce Sumter would provoke an attack, and so involve a war at that point.

"The fact of preparation for such an expedition would inevitably transpire, and would therefore precipitate the war—and probably defeat the object. I do not think it

¹ 3 Nicolay and Hay, 429 ff. Cameron seems to have been absent.

² 1 Moore's *Rebellion Record*, Doc., p. 42; 3 Nicolay and Hay, 431.

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wise to provoke a civil war beginning at Charleston and in rescue of an untenable position.

"Therefore, I advise against the expedition in every view.

"*Second.* I would call in Captain M. C. Meigs forthwith. Aided by his counsel, I would at once, and at every cost, prepare for a war at Pensacola and Texas, *to be taken, however, only as a consequence of maintaining the possessions and authority of the United States.*¹

"*Third.* I would instruct Major Anderson to retire from Sumter forthwith."²

Because war would as certainly be brought on by the reinforcement of Pickens as by the resupplying of Sumter, it seems just to infer that Seward did not at this time intend to do either, but merely to continue to hold Pickens and to be ready for war "as a consequence of maintaining the possessions and authority of the United States." However, he must have realized that his original plans were almost sure to be rejected for those of the opposite faction in the Cabinet, and that the only way to maintain his supremacy was by means of some new and vigorous move. Undoubtedly he still hoped to continue through negotiation his policy of peace and procrastination, but he saw the importance of being ready to take the lead in any case. That afternoon he took Captain Meigs to the White House and urged Lincoln to put him in command of the three great Florida fortresses on the Gulf—Pickens, Taylor, and Jefferson.³ About the same time the President ordered the preparation of an expedition that should be ready to leave for Sumter by April 6th, but the use of which should depend upon circumstances.⁴

On Saturday, March 30th, Campbell had another interview with Seward and left with him a telegram from Governor Pickens inquiring the cause of the delay in

¹ Italics not in original.

² 3 Nicolay and Hay, 434-36.

³ 3 Nicolay and Hay, 480.

⁴ 3 Nicolay and Hay, 483.

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evacuating Sumter. Lamon had led the Governor to expect that it would take place before that date.¹ This involved Lincoln, and Seward said that he could not give a definite reply until Monday, April 1st. Seward gave Campbell no ground to suspect that there had been any change of plans; for Crawford wrote to Toombs: "The result of that interview was to satisfy him [Campbell] entirely upon the good faith of the government in everything except the time as to when Sumter was to have been evacuated, and the truth in reference to that is the promise was made *after* the Cabinet and President had agreed to the order for evacuation, and the persons thus pledging its fulfilment had no reason to suspect that any influences whatever would delay its prompt execution."² By telegraph they expressed their confidence that "no attempt to reinforce Pickens has been or will be made without notice."³ Somebody had persuaded the commissioners that the *Tribune* report about the order to reinforce Fort Pickens was designed to help the Republicans in some local elections.⁴

On Sunday, the 31st, Seward requested Meigs and Colonel Keyes, Scott's military secretary, to go to Scott and prepare a project for the relief of Fort Pickens, and bring it to the President before four o'clock. They made their report without having had time to see Scott, and Lincoln, through Seward, gave positive orders for Scott to carry it out.⁵ The next day, April 1st, on Seward's recommendation, Lincoln directed Lieutenant David D. Porter to "proceed to New York, and, with the least possible delay, assume command of any naval steamer available. Proceed to Pensacola Harbor, and at any cost or risk prevent any expedition from the main-land reaching Fort Pickens or Santa Rosa."⁶ A telegram

¹ Crawford, 887, 878, 874.

² March 30th.

³ 8 Nicolay and Hay, 486.

II.—I

⁴ Despatch of April 1st.

⁵ Roman's despatch, March 29th.

⁶ 4 *Naval Records*, 108.

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from the President instructed the commandant of the New York navy-yard to "fit out the *Powhatan* to go to sea at the earliest possible moment under sealed orders"; and another order of the same date directed him "under no circumstances communicate to the Navy Department the fact that she is fitting out."¹ Seward not only had the management of the whole movement, but Welles and Cameron were to know no more about it than if they were Confederates. Seward had given Lincoln's oral order to Scott; he had recommended Porter's appointment and instructions.² Keyes, Meigs, and Porter made the preparations under his advice and that of Scott; and Scott prepared and gave to him, for the President's signature, the order for the departure of the expedition.³ When the movement seemed to be endangered from lack of available money, Seward went to his department and took from the secret-service fund ten thousand dollars in gold, which was put at Meigs's disposal.⁴ Nothing then known to others accounts for such acts as these.⁵

When Campbell called on the Secretary of State, April 1st, he was informed that the President was much disturbed by Governor Pickens's telegram and Lamon's pledge, for Lamon had had no commission or authority.⁶ Campbell asked what he should tell the commissioners about Sumter. Seward took up his pen and wrote that

¹ 4 *Naval Records of the Rebellion*, 109.

² 2 *Lincoln's Works*, 28.

³ 3 Nicolay and Hay, 439.

⁴ Crawford, 411.

⁵ Lincoln signed the orders without having time to consider their meaning, and subsequently repudiated whatever interfered with the Fort Sumter expedition. The only defence that has ever been made of Seward's concealment from Welles and Cameron was that there were disloyal clerks in the War and the Navy Departments. The explanation does not explain why the Secretaries of these departments, as well as Seward, might not have kept the secret and avoided using any one under suspicion. The real reason will soon appear.

⁶ Crawford, 337.

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the President might desire to supply Fort Sumter, but would not undertake to do so without first giving notice to Governor Pickens. Campbell was greatly surprised by the statement, for he had supposed that evacuation was only a matter of time. Now he feared lest the suggestion that the fort might be provisioned should indicate a change of plan and cause the South Carolinians to attack it. Seward expressed his belief that the fort would not be supplied. Campbell suggested that it would not be well to give the commissioners an answer that did not represent the purpose of the government. Seward then went to consult the President. When he came back he wrote this sentence for Campbell to repeat to the commissioners as his own: "I am satisfied the government will not undertake to supply Fort Sumter without giving notice to Governor Pickens."¹ Seward's explanation of the opposition to the plan of withdrawing from Sumter convinced Campbell that there had been no change of policy and that evacuation was merely delayed, or that the administration was waiting for Anderson to be starved out.²

By this time Seward recognized that he was in dire straits.³ For months he had firmly believed he was the only man that could save his country from countless disasters. Now a course of action that was contrary to his previous plans, advice, and expectations was likely to begin. In fact, expeditions for the relief of the two critical points were already preparing. If the Sumter

¹ Crawford, 337, 339; McPherson, 111.

² Campbell to Davis, April 8d; 3 Nicolay and Hay, 411; Commissioners to Toombs, April 1st; Crawford, 338.

³ In a brief note to Mrs. Seward, in Auburn, he wrote, April 1st: "But I am full of occupation, and more of anxieties. . . . Dangers and breakers are before us. I wish you were near enough to share some of my thoughts and feelings, and fears, and trials."—2 Seward, 534.

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expedition should be ordered forward—and the current was very strong in that direction—the world would understand that Seward's counsel had been rejected and that he had lost his power. It would humiliate him by making it plain that either he himself had been deceived or that he had tried to deceive others, and perhaps both. If the Fort Pickens expedition—which was Seward's almost exclusively—should be despatched as designed, and be successful, it would save a part of his prestige. But if either expedition should be carried out, southern Unionism would swing into secession, and a civil war—which he confidently believed would end in complete disunion and the overthrow of his party—would soon break out. Was there no way to avert these calamities?

Evidently as a last, desperate effort he laid this novel, elaborate, and dashing programme before the President :

Some Thoughts for the President's Consideration, *April 1, 1861.*

First. We are at the end of a month's administration, and yet without a policy either domestic or foreign.

Second. This, however, is not culpable, and it has even been unavoidable. The presence of the Senate, with the need to meet applications for patronage, have prevented attention to other and more grave matters.

Third. But further delay to adopt and prosecute our policies for both domestic and foreign affairs would not only bring scandal on the administration, but danger upon the country.

Fourth. To do this we must dismiss the applicants for office. But how? I suggest that we make the local appointments forthwith, leaving foreign or general ones for ulterior and occasional action.

Fifth. The policy at home. I am aware that my views are singular, and perhaps not sufficiently explained. My system is built upon this idea as a ruling one, namely, that we must

CHANGE THE QUESTION BEFORE THE PUBLIC FROM ONE
UPON SLAVERY, OR ABOUT SLAVERY, for a question upon
UNION OR DISUNION :

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In other words, from what would be regarded as a party question to one of patriotism or union.

The occupation or evacuation of Fort Sumter, although not in fact a slavery or a party question, is so regarded. Witness the temper manifested by the Republicans in the free states, and even by the Union men in the South.

I would therefore terminate it as a safe means for changing the issue. I deem it fortunate that the last administration created the necessity.

For the rest, I would simultaneously defend and reinforce all the forts in the Gulf, and have the navy recalled from foreign stations to be prepared for a blockade. Put the island of Key West under martial law.

This will raise distinctly the question of union or disunion. I would maintain every fort and possession in the South.

FOR FOREIGN NATIONS

I would demand explanations from Spain and France, categorically, at once.

I would seek explanations from Great Britain and Russia, and send agents into Canada, Mexico, and Central America to rouse a vigorous continental spirit of independence on this continent against European intervention.

And, if satisfactory explanations are not received from Spain and France,

Would convene Congress and declare war against them.

But whatever policy we adopt, there must be an energetic prosecution of it.

For this purpose it must be somebody's business to pursue and direct it incessantly.

Either the President must do it himself, and be all the while active in it, or

Devolve it on some member of his Cabinet. Once adopted, debates on it must end, and all agree and abide.

It is not in my especial province;

But I neither seek to evade nor assume responsibility.'

Even if Seward had not supplemented these propositions by having certain naval officers transferred so that they came into his plans,² we should have no doubts as to who expected to take command. Lincoln had as yet

² Lincoln's *Works*, 29.

³ Nicolay and Hay, 439-41; Welles, 69, 70.

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given few, if any, public indications of possessing greater abilities than such men as Bates, Smith, and Welles. His policy—or, rather, his lack of one—during March cannot be defended successfully; it can only be explained and excused. He had halted between two opinions and had acted on none.

It was Seward's foreign policy that was most startling. It resembled a reckless invention of a mind driven to desperate extremes, as the sole means of escape from ruin, rather than a serious outline for national and international action. Two or three days before the "Thoughts" were written, the newspapers reported that a revolution had overthrown the Dominican republic and had raised the flag and proclaimed the sovereignty of Spain. For some time, too, it was well known that France, Spain, and Great Britain were considering the question of intervening in Mexico in order to redress and stop the wrongs that their subjects had suffered from the anarchy and violence there. It was also rumored that a plan was developing to put a European prince upon a Mexican throne. Citizens of the United States had been subjected to so many outrages in Mexico that Buchanan had recommended to Congress that forcible intervention should be resorted to, but our domestic affairs had engrossed the attention of the statesmen at the Capitol. The three European powers had not yet reached any agreement; and it was wholly unwarrantable for the United States to assume that they intended to do more than enforce their just claims. As to Russia, the basis for demanding an explanation was to be found in the false reports in southern newspapers and in political circles in Washington that she was about to open diplomatic relations with the Confederacy.¹

¹ The following letter from the Assistant Secretary of State of that time is especially interesting because the diplomatic archives

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How did it happen that such a gorgeous and dangerous scheme found lodgment even in a mind as imaginative and bold as Seward's? He had early observed how advantageously public men can appeal to popular passions in dealing with foreign relations, and on a few occasions he had shown that he could outstrip all rivals when he really cared to do so. Yet even when advocating a policy that pointed straight toward war, he had generally taken pains to show that he deprecated

furnish no clew to an understanding of Seward's proposition in respect to Russia :

"MONTROSE, N. Y., June 2, 1864.

"MY DEAR SIR :—Your letter of the 28th is received.

"Russia, at the outbreak of the War of 1812, offered her friendly mediation to prevent hostilities between the United States and Great Britain. Animated by the same spirit, she sought, early in 1861, to avert the threatened hostilities between the South and the Union. The Russian Minister at Washington, Mr. Stoeckl, had an intimate, personal acquaintance with Slidell, Benjamin, and other southern Senators, and he went to the very verge of diplomatic prudence in his efforts to bring them into a good understanding with the Lincoln administration. Of course these efforts were made with a view of keeping them in the Union. Equally of course, perhaps, the secessionists chose, in their published correspondence, and in the press, to claim that these were intimations on the part of Russia of a design to manifest 'sympathy with the South' and to 'recognize' and 'open diplomatic relations with the Confederacy.' You will find plenty of references to this in the *Confederate Records*, and in the newspapers of that day. The 'explanation' sought from Russia by the Secretary of State was not of anything she had done, but of the purposes so ostentatiously imputed to her. Prince Gortschakoff, as soon as he realized the situation, and even before being called upon, gave the unequivocal assurance of Russia's sympathy with the Union, which you will find in the Diplomatic Correspondence of 1861. The intercourse between the Russian Minister and the southern Senators came to an abrupt termination when the first gun was fired at Sumter.

"In regard to France and Spain and Great Britain, you have already studied out the *causæ rerum*.

"Very truly yours,

(Signed)

"FREDERICK W. SEWARD.

"MR. FREDERIC BANCROFT,

"Washington."

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actual hostilities. In speaking on the Hungarian question, in 1852, he said he would "never counsel it [war] except on the ground of necessary defence."¹ As has been noticed, he reproached Soulé, in 1853, for exciting the American people against some of the European powers. "I cannot sympathize with such a spirit," he declared. "A war between the two continents would be a war involving not merely a trial [as to] which was the strongest, but [it would involve] the integrity of our republic."² As late as January 12, 1861, he plaintively asked in the Senate: "Have foreign nations combined, and are they coming in rage upon us? No. So far from being enemies, there is not a nation on the earth that is not an interested, admiring friend."³ He now ignored all these solemn opinions of the past. He was zealous to do what would be most certain to make enemies of great nations and justify their combining and "coming in rage upon us." He would let neither expedition depart until he had stirred up a foreign war as the main-spring of his policy, for it was the prerequisite of changing the issue.⁴ Why, in our

¹ 1 *Works*, 202.

² 3 *Works*, 616. Again, in 1856, when it looked as if we were to have a conflict with England, he was careful not to glorify war: "Although I believe war sometimes justifiable, I regard it always, nevertheless, as a calamity and an evil. I do not agree with either those who suppose it contributes to national prosperity or those who regard it as a salutary discipline of states."—*Globe*, 1855-56, Apdx., 79.

³ 4 *Works*, 662.

⁴ This must have been the case unless he had lost his reason. If only the Fort Pickens expedition had gone forward, even that would soon, if not immediately, have precipitated a civil war. There was no possibility for Seward to receive answers to the demands on the different powers and get Congress together before June. Moreover, he had expressly said that he would "simultaneously defend and reinforce all the forts in the Gulf, and have the Navy recalled from the foreign stations to be prepared for a blockade." Two months, at least, would have been required for this. He certainly did not expect that mere talk of a foreign war would "change the issue"; nor

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critical condition, it would not have sufficed to pick a quarrel with one foreign nation at a time does not appear, unless it was that he was so bent on speedily having a conflict of that kind that he sought it in several quarters so as to avoid delay and disappointment.

Seward's theory of the unifying effect of a foreign war had long been revolved in his mind. At the dinner of the New England Society he had declared that if New York should be attacked by any foreign power "all the hills of South Carolina would pour forth their population to the rescue."¹ During the war of 1812 Jefferson had maintained, Seward said in the speech of January 12th, "that states must be kept within their constitutional sphere by impulsion, if they could not be held there by attraction. Secession was then held to be inadmissible in the face of a public enemy."² The news about Santo Domingo came just at the time when Seward was in the most distressing circumstances. So he resolved to test his theory.

A third person, viewing the problem as it seemed to be laid before the President by the "Thoughts," would have expected that Seward's exit from the Cabinet would soon follow. But when, just before the inauguration, Lincoln insisted that Seward should share his responsibilities and help keep the Republican factions together for the welfare of the nation, it meant that personal eccentricities, however great, were not to have much weight. So with the most perfect self-possession the President replied that he had pursued "the

could he have imagined that after a civil war had begun a foreign war in addition would have been a panacea. Therefore, it is believed that the projects spoken of in the "Thoughts" were to take precedence to all other plans. Otherwise, how could "all agree and abide"? The opinion of March 15th supports this view. See *ante*, p. 100, last sentence.

¹ 4 *Works*, 649.

² 4 *Works*, 653.

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exact domestic policy you now urge, with the single exception that it does not propose to abandon Fort Sumter," and added :

"Again, I do not perceive how the reinforcement of Fort Sumter would be done on a slavery or a party issue, while that of Fort Pickens would be done on a more national and patriotic one.

"The news received yesterday in regard to St. Domingo certainly brings a new item within the range of our foreign policy ; but up to that time we have been preparing circulars and instructions to ministers and the like, all in perfect harmony, without even a suggestion that we had no foreign policy."

As to Seward's suggestion about adopting an energetic policy and having some one for an absolute leader, he said :

"I remark that if this must be done, I must do it. When a general line of policy is adopted, I apprehend there is no danger of its being changed without good reason, or continuing to be a subject of unnecessary debate ; still, upon points arising in its progress I wish, and I suppose I am entitled to have, the advice of all the Cabinet."¹

Of course Seward's "Thoughts" in no way interrupted the preparation of the two expeditions to go South. The *Powhatan* and other ships were made ready during the first days of April. By the 4th Lincoln had decided to attempt the relief of Fort Sumter. On the 5th Secretary Welles, with the approval of the President, appointed Captain Mercer naval commander of the Sumter

¹ It was natural for the President not to be altogether satisfied with what Scott had done, or to feel quite certain as to what he might do. So, also on April 1st, he sent him these lines : "Would it impose too much labor on General Scott to make short, comprehensive daily reports to me of what occurs in his department, including movements by himself, and under his orders, and the receipt of intelligence ? If not, I will thank him to do so."—2 *Lincoln's Works*, 80.

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fleet, and instructed him to take the *Powhatan* as the flag-ship—the *Powhatan* already assigned to Porter, the naval commander of the Pickens expedition. After Mercer had taken possession of her, on the 6th, Porter appeared, showed his orders signed by the President, and demanded control because the President's command took precedence. Before Mercer recognized the superiority of the President's instructions to those of the Secretary of the Navy, the confusion was reported to Seward, who took the telegram to Welles. Then both went to the White House, each hoping to win the President's approval. Regarding the Sumter expedition as the more urgent, and the *Powhatan* as of vital importance to it, Lincoln quickly gave his support to Welles. Seward objected and made excuses, but Lincoln was peremptory. Then the Secretary of State telegraphed these words to Porter: "Give up the *Powhatan* to Mercer.—Seward." By this time Porter had superseded Mercer and was on the way to Fort Pickens, but he was soon overtaken. Having successfully maintained a few hours before that an order signed by the President outranked one by the Secretary of the Navy, he was in no mood to admit that the presidential order could be swept away by a few words telegraphed in the name of Seward; therefore, he held his course, and other parts of this expedition soon followed.¹

It was a striking exhibition of Seward's mental state at the time that he should fail to send the command in the President's name, when within a few hours the administration had been sorely distressed by two mistakes of just this kind—one of which Seward was then trying to correct. The other related to Scott's order of March 12th to reinforce Fort Pickens. That very after-

¹ For particulars about many of the facts stated in this paragraph, see 4 Nicolay and Hay, chap. i.

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noon of April 6th a special messenger from Pensacola harbor had reported that the United States officer in command there had declined to land troops at Fort Pickens, because, as has been mentioned, instructions from Scott could not be recognized as overruling those of Buchanan issued by his Secretaries of War and of the Navy.

During the first days of April Seward's communications with the Confederate commissioners came to a climax. After April 1st the reports that hostile movements were preparing grew more positive from day to day. On the 4th the commissioners credited the rumor that the United States intended to resist the acquisition of Santo Domingo by Spain. The next day they suspected that this might be a ruse. By the evening of the 6th they thought the armaments were to be used against Fort Pickens, and perhaps against Sumter.¹ Early the following (Sunday) morning Campbell was again called in. He then sent a note to Seward, stating that various reports had caused the commissioners "anxiety and concern for two or three days"; that he had repeated to them the assurances that the administration would give notice to Governor Pickens before attempting to supply Sumter, and that he (Campbell) "should have notice whenever any measure changing the existing status prejudicially to the Confederate States is contemplated as respects Fort Pickens." He concluded with these sentences: "I do not experience the same anxiety or concern as they express. But if I have said more than I am authorized, I pray that you will advise me."² To this inquiry Seward answered, without date or signature: "Faith as to Sumter fully kept; wait and see; other suggestions received, and will be respectfully considered."³ Campbell understood this

¹ Telegrams to Toombs of the dates mentioned.

² This is quoted from the copy preserved by the commissioners.

³ Crawford's *Genesis, etc.*, 840. The copy that the commissioners

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to mean that Governor Pickens should have notice before an attempt should be made to supply Sumter, but that the assurances as to Fort Pickens were no longer to be depended on.¹

Sufficient had been learned to convince the commissioners that a "hostile movement" was on foot and that an expedition had sailed against the Confederate States. "It may be Sumter and the Mississippi. It is almost certain that it is Pickens and the Texas frontier." That evening the commissioners' secretary informed the Assistant Secretary of State—the Secretary not being at home—that an answer to the commissioners' note of March 12th would be called for the following afternoon.²

Seward's formal reply, which was dated March 15th, was found to be a clear and positive denial of all the requests and presumptions of the Confederate commissioners. In the events that had occurred in the seven states he saw

"not a rightful and accomplished revolution and an independent nation, with an established government, but rather

took of Campbell's letter, to which this was a reply, contains nothing to call forth the last eight words. It seems likely that after the commission's copy of Campbell's note was made, he added his offer to go to Montgomery, to which Crawford refers (*ibid.*), and to which Seward's eight words were probably an answer.

¹ This is shown by his written statement to the commissioners, which is reflected in the following letter to Seward :

"WASHINGTON CITY, April 7, 1861.

"DEAR SIR:—I have said to the commissioners to-day I believe that the government will not undertake to supply Sumter without notice to Governor Pickens.

"I have said further that, heretofore, I have felt justified in saying 'That whenever any measure changing the existing status as respects Fort Pickens prejudicially to the Confederate States is contemplated I should have notice,' but that I do not feel at liberty to say this now.

"Very respectfully, "J. A. CAMPBELL."

² Telegram of April 7th.

—Seward MSS.

³ Memorandum of the secretary in the records of the commission.

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a perversion of a temporary and partisan excitement to the inconsiderate purpose of an unjustifiable and unconstitutional aggression upon the rights and the authority vested in the Federal government, and hitherto benignly exercised, . . . for the maintenance of the Union, the preservation of liberty, and the security, peace, welfare, happiness, and aggrandizement of the American people."

For a cure of the evils, he said, he looked patiently and confidently "to regular and considerate action of the people of those states, in co-operation with their brethren in the other states, through the Congress of the United States, and such extraordinary conventions, if there shall be need thereof, as the Federal Constitution contemplates and authorizes to be assembled."¹

In a long rejoinder the commissioners reproached Lincoln's administration for being "persistently wedded to those fatal theories of construction of the Federal Constitution always denied by the statesmen of the South," and they tried to make it appear that the United States were responsible for the impending war because no negotiations would be entered into with the representatives of the Confederacy. They had no fear of the results; their people could never be subdued "while a freeman survives in the Confederate States to wield a weapon." They advised Seward to dismiss as delusions his hopes of bringing the Confederate States into submission. Evidently angered by what he had said about a "perversion of a temporary and partisan excitement," they sarcastically replied: "If you cherish these dreams you will be awakened from them and find them as unreal and unsubstantial as others in which you have recently indulged."² On the 10th they reported their mission to be closed.

The ships of the Sumter expedition left New York on the 8th, 9th, and 10th.³ In compliance with the promise, Governor Pickens was officially informed on the first

¹ McPherson's *Rebellion*, 109.

² McPherson, 109, 110.

³ Crawford, 416.

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date that an attempt would be made to put provisions into Fort Sumter; but that, unless this should be resisted or the fort attacked, no troops or military supplies would be thrown in without further notice.¹ The sending of supplies to United States troops in a state that had seceded was regarded in the South as evidence of an intention to coerce the states. The Confederate leaders fully realized the undesirability of a conflict, but every suggestion of force had to be resisted in order to keep up popular confidence and to win the actual support of a large majority of the people of the slave states that were still nominally loyal. They chose war and its necessary accompaniments of blood and destruction in order to preclude the possibility of a reaction in favor of union. The different batteries around the harbor opened a converging fire on Fort Sumter early on the morning of April 12th. Throughout that day, and until the afternoon of the next, Anderson and his men doggedly kept up the contest against vastly superior forces. Then, seeing no likelihood either of relief or of being able to hold out much longer, they agreed to capitulate.

But for two unforeseen occurrences the result might have been different. A part of the fleet reached the *rendezvous* off Charleston harbor on the day the attack began, and in time to succor the fort if the other ships had arrived as was planned. A storm had scattered the tugs which were necessary to perform some of the work inside the harbor; and the ships that were ready for action waited for the *Powhatan*—the *Powhatan* in which Porter was hastening to Fort Pickens—for she was counted upon as the head of the Sumter fleet and had been specially equipped for the most difficult part of the work to be done in Charleston harbor. Before Fox could organize a forward movement out of the

¹ 2 Lincoln's *Works*, 82.

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meagre resources at command, the firing of the guns ceased.

At Fort Pickens the conditions were favorable. A second order to land the troops already in the harbor had been issued and obeyed before the Seward-Porter expedition arrived. The coming of the ships with supplies and reinforcements made it possible to put the fort on a safe footing; and thenceforth, throughout the war, the stars and stripes defied the neighboring Confederate batteries.

Seward's acts in connection with these expeditions have been the cause of two serious charges: First, that he wilfully tried to prevent the relief of Fort Sumter; and, second, that he acted dishonorably toward Justice Campbell and the Confederate commissioners.

1. Welles and Blair were the chief accusers on the first charge.¹ Their suspicions began with the assumption that the *Powhatan* was *taken out* of the Sumter fleet. The President and the Secretary of the Navy each on April 1st sent instructions for the *Powhatan* to be fitted out as soon as possible. Lincoln's original intention was to have her go with the Pickens expedition, and he issued instructions to this effect, as already mentioned. Welles expected to use the *Powhatan* as the flag-ship of the Sumter fleet, but did not give his orders until four days later.² It was natural that each should desire the *Powhatan*. After what has been learned of Seward's methods, it would hardly be warrantable to express confidence that his despatch to Porter was not the result of subtle calculation. But the probability that he was half-distracted by the occurrences of that day, and the well-known fact that he was the real chief of the expedition—these seem sufficient to explain his failure to telegraph the command in the President's name.

¹ Welles, 61-67.

² S Nicolay and Hay, 439.

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It is not so easy to deal with what is known as the Harvey incident. When the government seized the copies of the despatches in the Washington telegraph offices it was found that, on April 6th, James E. Harvey had telegraphed to Charleston: "Positively determined not to withdraw Anderson. Supplies go immediately, supported by a naval force under Stringham if their landing be resisted.—A Friend."¹ Harvey was a South Carolinian by birth, and had lately been a Washington correspondent for several northern newspapers. A little later he became Minister to Portugal. Upon the discovery of his despatch, the New York *Tribune*, the *Times*, and many other newspapers demanded his immediate recall, for his act was akin to treason.² A Senate committee also made a like demand, but without effect. Why? Seward stood in the way. Not only had he given Harvey the information, but he knew of the telegram the day it was sent. Nevertheless, he allowed him to depart on his mission; and later, when everybody was boiling with indignation, Seward explained that at first he himself was indignant and advised the President to revoke Harvey's commission. "But thinking it over coolly," said Seward, "I thought it wrong to punish a man for his stupid folly, when really he had committed no crime!"³ This attitude of easy indifference must be judged in connection with two facts already noticed: First, that at the time Seward confided in a native Southerner the profound secrets of the Sumter expedition, he was himself conducting the Pickens enterprise with a degree of secrecy that did not permit knowledge of it to reach the Secretaries from whose departments the troops, vessels, and supplies were ordered; and, second, that he had predicted that

¹ *1 War Records*, 287.

² *Tribune*, June 8, 10, 20, 1861; *Times*, June 7, 1861.

³ *4 Nicolay and Hay*, 81, 82.

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the fact of preparations for the relief of Sumter "would inevitably transpire."¹ The plain inference was that there would not be a similar danger in regard to one preparing for Fort Pickens. *A priori* it seemed to others that the likelihood of exposure would be considerably greater, for Fort Pickens was twice as far from New York.

Nevertheless, probably Blair and Welles have charged too much. If Seward had really meant to prevent the success of the Sumter expedition, it would only have been necessary for him to inform the commissioners indirectly. Then the fort would have been attacked and taken before the ships could leave New York. Harvey's telegram was discredited, and the Confederates continued to have suspicions merely, until Lincoln's messenger arrived. Seward was so eager to have the Pickens expedition succeed that he may have thought it would do no harm to let all suspicions be directed toward Fort Sumter. But his well-known pledges that Sumter would be abandoned, his personal humiliation at being overruled, and his consequent inclination to let it be known in advance that he had no responsibility for or pride in that enterprise—these would seem to be sufficient to explain his amazing carelessness about one expedition, while the secrecy of another was so perfectly guarded.

2. As an exhibition of character and politics, the acts of the Confederate commissioners and Seward's communications with them are both to be regretted. The Confederate authorities felt deeply chagrined that their envoys to Washington had obtained neither direct recognition nor an official pledge to continue the defenceless peace. Instead of either, a war had begun and the Confederacy had taken the initiative. They had

¹ Seward's opinions of March 15th and 29th.

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based their chief reliance on Seward's hopes and pledges—on his all but fatal illusions. When he was overruled, their plans became worthless; so they tried to make a scape-goat of him.¹ The pith of the charge was that Seward studiously deceived them by entering into and then violating a promise, a pledge, a contract even, by which the commissioners, in consideration of the assurance that Fort Sumter was to be evacuated, agreed temporarily to forbear to ask an answer to their note. It must be admitted that Seward was unwarrantably positive about Sumter. His misconception of the weight of the influences on his side deceived himself and correspondingly deceived the Confederates. Probably Lincoln did not know all about the communications regarding Fort Sumter until April 1st, when he promised that it should not be supplied without notice to Governor Pickens. Although Seward still expected evacuation, and so indicated to Campbell, all concerned understood that Lincoln's pledge took the place of Seward's earlier declaration. This pledge was faithfully kept, and the Confederates were allowed a generous margin of time between the actual notice and the arrival of any of the ships. How, then, do the accusers make their

¹ In a long letter of April 18, 1861, Campbell told Seward that the commissioners "conclude they have been abused and overreached," and he expressed his belief that any candid man would agree that "the equivocating conduct of the administration" was "the proximate cause of the great calamity" of the outbreak of hostilities.—*McPherson's Rebellion*, 111. In a message to the Confederate Congress, April 29th, Jefferson Davis said: "The crooked path of diplomacy can scarcely furnish an example so wanting in courtesy, in candor, and directness as was the course of the United States government toward our commissioners in Washington."—1 *Davis's Confederate Government*, 260. Almost a decade later, Alexander H. Stephens recorded it as his opinion for posterity that the commissioners "were met with an equivocation, a duplicity, a craft, and deceit which, taken altogether, is without a parallel in modern times!"—2 *War Between the States*, 346.

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point? By juggling with the facts. They misrepresented that Seward's sentence, "Faith as to Sumter fully kept," referred to his original assurance that Sumter was to be evacuated, instead of to Lincoln's promise to give notice to Governor Pickens. The Confederate leaders in Washington, in Montgomery, and in Charleston correctly understood what that sentence meant, as their correspondence shows.¹

Fortunately for Seward, at that time, they made their charges of deception in connection with Fort Sumter instead of Fort Pickens. The reason was that the whole course of events was changed by the action in Charleston harbor, while that in Pensacola harbor attracted comparatively little attention. It is certain that Seward knew he was deceiving the Confederates between March 28th and April 7th.² Unless he had not heard of Scott's order of March 12th (which is altogether improbable), or unless he was sure that it would be disregarded contrary to Lincoln's expectations, the deception began on March 15th and continued until April 7th, when his failure to reply to Campbell's reference to Fort Pickens in the letter of that date led the Confederates to infer that that fort was to be reinforced.

Each side endeavored to overreach and outwit the other. From the previous midwinter until the second

¹ On April 7th, Governor Pickens telegraphed to the commissioners to get accurate information. Crawford replied the next day: "We were reassured yesterday that the status at Sumter would not be changed without previous notice to Governor Pickens, but we have no faith in them. The war policy prevails in the Cabinet at this hour." On the 9th Crawford telegraphed to Beauregard, at Charleston, "The messenger [from Lincoln] doubtless speaks by authority. He gives the promised notice to Governor Pickens. Diplomacy has failed."—1 *War Records*, 297. See also *ibid.*, 283, 284, 286, 287, 289. There are other evidences in the MS. archives of the commission.


² See *ante*, pp. 126, 140, 141.



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week in April, Seward was determined to prevent the outbreak of the civil war. So in secret interviews, anonymous notes, and indirect intercourse he gave assurances that could surely be fulfilled only in case he instead of Lincoln should control affairs. This he was confident would be the case. He probably thought, too, that there was no need of great scrupulousness in dealing with men who were trying to destroy the Union.

The numerous complications in which he so strangely involved himself were the outgrowth of two supreme illusions. The first was that the Southerners had stronger ties to the Federal government than to slavery, and that, if given time to reflect, they would not go to war in the interest of that institution. The second was that he alone could furnish and direct the policy—whether of peace, procrastination, and compromise, or of war, civil or intercontinental, or both—by which the country was to be saved. His ambition was for the Union vastly more than for himself. He sought power and mastery of the administration and of all difficulties, not because he wanted the glory of a semi-dictatorship, but because he honestly believed that that was the way for him to serve and to save the nation.



CHAPTER XXX

THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE — SHAPING FOREIGN RELATIONS, 1861

THE Secretary of State is regarded as the highest political officer appointed by the President. Seward was fortunate in having had much experience in discussing questions in foreign relations, for since 1857 he had been a member of the Senate committee on foreign affairs. He had a reputation for hospitality, affability, discretion, and adaptability. On the other hand, the exigencies of party leadership and his fondness for showy declarations and surprising prophecies had occasionally led him into saying some unpleasant things about European monarchies. In a public letter in 1846, he announced: "The monarchs of Europe are to have no rest while they have a colony remaining on this continent."¹ When advocating a welcome to Kossuth, he maintained: "This republic is, and forever must be, a living offence to Russia and to Austria and to despotic powers everywhere. You will never, by whatever humiliations, gain one friend or secure one ally in Europe or America that wears a crown."² At the same time he referred to Napoleon III. as "the youthful and impatient Bonaparte, the sickly successor of the Romans." In 1856 he mentioned the "treachery by which Louis Napoleon rose to a throne on the ruins of the republic,"³ and he pronounced the French Empire "a hateful usurpation."⁴

¹ 8 *Works*, 409.

² 1 *Works*, 184.

³ 4 *Works*, 562.

⁴ *Globe*, 1855-56, Apdx., 79.

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Yet Napoleon, if he had ever heard of Seward's expressions, was able to overlook them and to treat the New York Senator with marked attention when he visited France in 1859. Seward had spoken of Great Britain in such terms as to cause himself to be regarded as especially unfriendly. His remarks in the debates about the Irish "patriots" and the Clayton-Bulwer treaty were illustrations.¹ When discussing the latter subject he characterized Great Britain to be the foreign power that was "the greatest, the most grasping, and the most rapacious in the world." "Without a war on our part, Great Britain will wisely withdraw and disappear from this hemisphere within a quarter of a century—at least within half a century."² The acquisition of Canada by the United States had long been known to be one of his favorite ideas.³ Lord John Russell, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, recorded his suspicions as early as February 20, 1861—more than five weeks before the actual proposition of April 1st was made—that an attempt might be made to get up a quarrel with Great Britain in case other plans should fail to reunite the sections.⁴ But wise nations let the past lie buried, unless some new issue stirs up old grievances or animosities.

From 1820 to 1866 the Department of State at Washington was located in a dingy little structure, two stories

¹ See *ante*, Vol. I., pp. 828 ff., 484 ff.

² *Globe*, 1855-56, 290, and Apdx., 79.

³ It was well known that he had spoken of this as a means of compensation to freedom for the acquisitions slavery had made on the South. (3 *Works*, 278; 4 *Works*, 442.) In the debate about the fisheries in August, 1852, he said: "A war about these fisheries would be a war which would result either in the independence of the British provinces, or in their annexation to the United States. I devoutly pray that that consummation may come; the sooner the better; but I do not desire it at the cost of war, or injustice. I am content to wait for the ripened fruit which must fall."—1 *Works*, 278. For other references about Canada, see *post*, p. 472.

⁴ *Parliamentary Papers, North America*, No. 1, p. 18.

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high, which stood on ground now covered by the northern end of the Treasury building. Its corridors and rooms were small, and an English traveller wrote, early in 1861, that one would see much more bustle in the passages leading to the council-room of a poor-law board or a parish vestry.¹ Here the most important years of Seward's life were to be spent. In 1866 the department was removed to the building, now occupied as an orphan asylum, at the corner of 14th and S Streets N. W.²

The home personnel of the department numbered less than half as many as in 1899. For Assistant-Secretary, Seward chose his son Frederick. He was a lawyer by profession, but during most of the decade since his admission to the bar he had been associate-editor of the Albany *Evening Journal*. He had never held a public office, but journalism and intimate association with his father and Weed had made him familiar with political affairs. Although he had not completed his thirty-first year, he soon demonstrated that he possessed ability and good judgment. The chief clerk, William Hunter, was a man of uncommon energy, then only a little past the middle-point of his nearly three-score years of valuable service in this department. At present there are a second-assistant secretary and a third-assistant secretary, and six distinct bureaus, each with a chief; in Seward's time none of these offices existed.

Not less important than the departmental officials at home were its leading representatives abroad. Both custom and the public service demanded that Buchanan's appointees abroad should give place to Republicans.³

¹ Russell's *Diary*, 36.

² It remained there until 1875, when it was given its present fine quarters next to the War and Navy Departments in the gigantic granite edifice south of Pennsylvania Avenue and east of 17th Street.—Gaillard Hunt, *The Department of State*, 202.

³ Writing a few months later of the diplomatic service of Buchanan.

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Charles Francis Adams, Seward's close political and personal friend, succeeded George M. Dallas as Minister to Great Britain. Although known as a man of marked talent and character, Adams was without experience in diplomacy. It was, therefore, extremely odd in American politics that a third Adams, in direct line, should represent his country at the Court of St. James. William L. Dayton was appointed in place of Charles J. Faulkner as United States representative at the Court of the Tuileries. His prominence in his party was regarded as establishing a just claim to so conspicuous a place, after it was not found practicable to make him a member of the Cabinet. For similar reasons Cassius M. Clay was sent to Russia. Carl Schurz, then a young lawyer in Wisconsin, but already famous for his eloquent and effective antislavery speeches, was given the mission to Spain. Within a year he was transferred by request from the legation to the Federal army. George P. Marsh became the first United States Minister to the new Kingdom of Italy. He had essayed both politics and diplomacy, but his chief work had been done in philology. After Austria had given notice that Anson Burlingame would be *persona non grata*, John Lothrop Motley was received at Vienna with special favor. His *Dutch Republic* had already given him a world-wide reputation; and a long letter that he published in the

an's administration Seward, said: "Our representatives whom that administration had placed in communication with foreign courts were in many cases equally demoralized, and in some, as we had reason to believe, absolutely disloyal. Agents of the insurrectionists were already understood to be living in European capitals invoking recognition of a pretended new confederacy, on the ground that the revolution which should precede it was already *de facto* accomplished. They inculcated the doctrine that the government of the United States could not, and that it would not, even though it should become necessary, maintain the Union by the employment of force."—Seward to Dayton, July 6, 1861. MS.

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London *Times*, on the struggle in the United States, was the first, and perhaps the best, of the many impressive arguments addressed to Europe in behalf of the Federal Union. But no appointment of the new administration was quite so significant as that of Thomas Corwin. Mexico, bankrupt and the prey of political wolves, knew what it meant for the United States to send to her the man who, in that immortal protest against indulging the passion for conquest, said that if he were a Mexican he would welcome the invading Americans "with bloody hands to hospitable graves." John Bigelow, the new consul at Paris, had for several years been associated with William Cullen Bryant as one of the editors of the New York *Evening Post*. His energy, judgment, and knowledge of European affairs soon made him one of the most useful of Seward's coadjutors. After Dayton's death he became the Minister; and from first to last his services during this period were unrivaled by those of any other representative abroad except Adams.

When Lincoln was elected, the government was on friendly terms with all nations. France and Great Britain were the powers whose good-will was of the first importance to the United States. The relations with Great Britain had never been more agreeable. Toward the end of 1860 the Prince of Wales made a tour of the United States. The enthusiastic welcome he received brought out an exchange of hearty congratulations between the two countries, and many on each side rejoiced at the prospect of a long period of cordiality. Governor Morgan, of New York, gave an official reception and dinner in honor of the royal party. Seward was one of the guests and took special pride in the occasion, for he supposed that the Prince's visit was the result of a suggestion that he made to the British

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Minister a year or two before.¹ Between Americans and Frenchmen there was a traditional friendship that had some sentimental importance, but only little practical force. The two peoples have so few traits and tendencies in common that they generally misjudge one another both as persons and as nations. The citizens of the United States could not forget that France was tolerating the usurpations of Napoleon III., and the French were not pleased by the disapproval. However, no serious ill-will was felt on either side.

The diplomatic corps in Washington had closely watched the course of events since November. The national capital was then a southern city in nearly every respect. Its aristocratic society was composed almost entirely of persons who were not only slave-holders, but were also either leaders of secession or sympathizers with it. The representatives of foreign nations were brought into intimate relations with this class, and some of them received extremely pro-southern impressions. They in turn influenced the opinions of the Secretaries of Foreign Affairs of their respective governments. It was in this way, as well as by the declarations of southern sympathizers in Europe, that the political world abroad early came to take a favorable view of the power and prospects of the Confederacy.

A great war concerns a large part of the civilized world, and the principals in such a conflict are greatly affected by the attitude foreign nations assume toward them. These facts were early recognized by the Secretaries of State at Washington and at Montgomery, respectively. Even Buchanan's paralytic administration raised its shriveled arm to warn Europe against interference. On February 28, 1861, Secretary Black

¹ 2 Seward, 471.

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addressed a circular letter to our Ministers at the leading foreign capitals, instructing them to use such means as they might consider proper and necessary to prevent the anticipated efforts of the Confederacy to obtain a recognition of independence. "This government has not relinquished its constitutional jurisdiction within the territory of those states, and it does not desire [!] to do so." It was evidently the right of this government, he said, to ask all foreign powers not to take any steps likely to encourage the revolutionary movement. An acknowledgment of the independence of the "Confederated States" by any nation would tend to disturb the friendly relations, diplomatic and commercial, now existing between that nation and the United States.¹ Black's communication seemed perfunctory and lifeless.

Nine days later Seward with vivacity and hope, "reiterated and amplified" Black's instructions, as he subsequently wrote.² Our Ministers were informed that they were expected to use "the greatest possible diligence and fidelity. . . . to counteract and prevent the designs of those who would invoke foreign intervention to embarrass and overthrow the Republic." The President entertained "full confidence in the speedy restoration of the harmony and unity of the government by a firm, yet just and liberal, bearing, co-operating with the deliberate and loyal action of the American people"; for the disturbances "had their origin only in popular passions, excited under novel circumstances of very transient character." The advantage that any nation might derive from a connection with the disaffected portion of our country would be merely ephemeral, and would be counterbalanced by the evils that would flow from disunion. He regretted that the disturbances might

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 81.

² *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 87.

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cause foreigners some inconvenience, but he announced it as the policy of the administration to indemnify all persons suffering any injury.¹ These were not altogether accurate statements, but Seward believed they were; and he had made an almost perfect expression of those considerations that are of the first importance in international relations. However, it was practically impossible to shape a definite foreign policy until after it could be known what the domestic one was to be. It has already been seen how this domestic policy, like a raft upon an inlet of the sea, drifted this way and that with the tide of public opinion.

Lincoln's rejection of the programme Seward proposed on April 1st² rid it of its dangerous features. But what became of the offences—then considered to be so serious—of Spain, of France, of Great Britain, and of Russia?

As has been mentioned, a revolution under Spanish influences had lately overthrown the Republic of Santo Domingo and proclaimed the supremacy of the mother-country. On April 2, 1861, before he had received official information of this fact, Seward wrote to Tassara, the Spanish Minister at Washington, saying that this reported attempt "cannot fail to be taken as a first step in a policy of armed intervention by the Spanish government in the American countries which once constituted Spanish America." There was grave significance in the following sentence:

"I am directed to inform you and the government of her Catholic Majesty, in a direct manner, that, if they [the revolutionary acts] shall be found to have received at any time the sanction of that government, the President will be obliged to regard them as manifesting an unfriendly spirit towards the United States, and to meet the further

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 32, 33.

² See *ante*, p. 132.

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prosecution of enterprises of that kind in regard to either the Dominican Republic or any part of the American continent or islands, with a prompt, persistent, and, if possible, effective resistance."¹

Two days later Minister Tassara made a discreet and soothing response, which did not especially change the aspect of the incident. Subsequently Spain replied so evasively that Seward anticipated that she would "in the end decide to recognize the revolution and to confirm the authority proclaimed in the island of Santo Domingo in her name." Thereupon he instructed our *chargé d'affaires* at Madrid to enter a protest against this assumption or exercise of authority—"a protest which, in every case, we shall expect to maintain."² Our new Minister, Carl Schurz, soon asked if the administration would have approved the action if his predecessor had broken off diplomatic relations with Spain on account of what had taken place.³ Seward directed Schurz to confine his action to a protest.⁴ On June 22d Seward wrote again, saying that he did "not think it would be expedient to divert its [Congress's] attention from the domestic subjects for which it is convened."⁵ About a week later the Spanish Minister read to him the royal decree pronouncing the annexation of Santo Domingo to Spain; but the Secretary concluded that no further action on the part of the United States would be necessary.⁶ When Schurz requested an explicit statement of the ulterior policy of the government, he was informed by the Secretary that there had been so many important questions demanding attention that time had not been found for the full consideration of this one; so the sub-

¹ MS. The references to the MS. diplomatic correspondence of the United States are, when not otherwise stated, to the MS. archives of the Department of State.

² Seward to Perry, May 21, 1861. MS.

³ Schurz to Seward, June 5, 1861. MS.

⁴ June 10, 1861. MS.

⁵ MS.

⁶ Seward to Schurz, July 2, 1861. MS.

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ject was left to Congress at its next regular session, beginning in December.¹ This was Seward's graceful way of escape from making good the direct threats of a few months before.

Spain pursued her own course in Santo Domingo. Instead of being a menace to the United States, although they were almost helpless, she could not consummate this little undertaking. For four years, and in vain, she poured out her money and sacrificed the lives of her soldiers in trying to get a permanent hold upon Santo Domingo; but in 1865 her rule was thrown off and the black republic revived.

France was the other power from which Seward had urged that explanations should be demanded "categorically, at once." Lincoln's rejection of the plan seems to have had a magical effect. The instructions to our Minister and the notes to the French legation show no trace of any except the most cordial relations between the two countries. Seward even had such confidence in Mercier, the French Minister at Washington, that within one day of the time when it was suggested that France must be called to account, he "confidentially" sent to Mercier a copy of the note just written to Tassara. The Secretary hoped to induce France to join us in the protest; for, he wrote, she has "an interest in the preservation of peace and order scarcely less than that which has induced this protest on the part of the United States."² But France ignored his communication.³ Seward solicited the co-operation of Great Britain also in opposing the annexation of Santo Domingo, and he made not the slightest allusion to the offences on her part that were regarded as so serious on April 1st. The British government, however, reluctantly accepted what

¹ Seward to Schurz, August 14, 1861. MS.

² MS.

³ Seward to Schurz, June 22, 1861. MS.

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Spain had done, after Spain had declared that slavery should not be established in the new territory.¹ As to Russia, the records of the department do not indicate that as much as a whisper of complaint was made against her. "That power," Seward wrote, May 6, 1861, to our new Minister, Cassius M. Clay, "was an early, and it has always been a constant, friend. This relationship between two nations so remote and so unlike has excited much surprise." Instead of inviting the disfavor of Russia by demanding an explanation of a not serious indiscretion on the part of her Minister, Seward instructed Clay to make it his business to inquire "whether the sluggish course of commerce between the two nations cannot be quickened and its volume increased." So Russia continued to be our warmest friend.

Thus it is seen how very different these results are from those contemplated in the "Thoughts for the President's Consideration," and how little occasion there was for proposing a course of action that would have been futile unless it had made both hemispheres blaze with war,—and then it would have been the most wicked and dangerous thing conceivable.

The despatches written by Seward before the fall of Fort Sumter show a wholly erroneous conception of the impending struggle with the South. The instructions of April 10th to Charles Francis Adams said that the President was not

"disposed to reject a cardinal dogma of theirs [the secessionists], namely, that the Federal government could not reduce the seceding states to obedience by conquest, even although he were disposed to question that proposition. But, in fact, the President willingly accepts it as true. Only an imperial or despotic government could subjugate

¹ Seward to Schurz, June 21, 1861. MS.

² *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 293.



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thoroughly disaffected and insurrectionary members of the state."

Seward believed that our system had "within itself, adequate peaceful, conservative, and recuperative forces." Some have thought that, when he spoke of "reunion" through constitutional amendments, he implied that actual disunion had been effected. He doubtless had in mind merely the disruption of sectional fraternity and the cessation of actual co-operation, for his next sentence declared that the President would "not suffer the Federal authority to fall into abeyance" nor aggravate existing evils by attempts at coercion.¹

Seward hoped to persuade European nations to accept his theory that the *de facto* sovereignty of the United States continued to exist within the Confederacy, although the Constitution and all signs of Federal authority—except in the Post Office Department, which was carried on at the expense of the loyal people—had been superseded by Confederate control, and although it was repeatedly announced that there was to be no military coercion, no physical attempt to prevent the Confederacy from perfecting its organization at home in every direction. From the beginning he proclaimed with confidence that the resources of the United States would be adequate to every emergency, and that the panic had nearly passed. There must be "no admissions of weakness in our Constitution, nor of apprehension on the part of the government." Suggestions of compromise must

¹ To the Minister to Prussia he wrote, March 22d: "The Union was formed upon popular consent, and must always practically stand on the same basis. . . . While it is the intention of the President to maintain the sovereignty and rightful authority of the Union everywhere with firmness as well as discretion, he at the same time relies with great confidence on the salutary working of the agencies I have mentioned [general and profound sentiments of loyalty] to restore the harmony and union of the states."—*Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 37.

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not be listered to, and if Great Britain should decide to recognize the enemies of the republic, she should also prepare to enter into an alliance with them. Our opposition to British interference was not to rest on the ground of any favor. No moral question [*i.e.*, slavery] that might be supposed to lie at the basis of our domestic conflict was to be brought into debate before the British government; for it should not be forgotten that all the states "must always continue to be equal and honored members of this Federal Union, and that their citizens throughout all political misunderstandings and alienations still are and always must be our kindred and countrymen." There had been much dissatisfaction in England on account of the recent Morrill tariff law. Seward said that, in passing that law, the United States had a right to consider their own convenience. The liberal commercial policy that the Confederacy might be ready to offer would depend on peace for its execution. Great Britain's sagacity might be trusted to decide how likely peace would be in such circumstances, and what would become of this policy when a tariff was needed to furnish the sinews of war. "Recognition by her of the so-called Confederate States would be intervention and war in this country." Furthermore, were the different parts of the British Empire held together by ties so strong that Great Britain could afford to set so dangerous a precedent as to encourage attempts at dismemberment? Above all, the citizens of the United States and of Great Britain were of common descent, language, customs, sentiments, and religion. The government and people of Great Britain might mistake their commercial interests, but they could not be indifferent to their ambition for civilization and humanity.

In the full text of this despatch there are a few sentences that warranted the conclusions of the correspondent of the London *Times*—when Seward read it to him

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on April 8th—that it contained an under-current of menace and an implication that England might wish to interfere.¹ The United States were, in fact, very weak, so far as making physical resistance to foreign nations was concerned. The thing next best to possessing strength was to display a confidence of possessing it; for this would be a warning that if any power should yield to the temptation to intermeddle, its action would be promptly resented. It was absolutely necessary to insist that the national integrity was only slightly impaired, and that the United States would demand and extend respect, which is the prerequisite of true friendship between governments. Otherwise there was no likelihood of preventing an early recognition of the Confederacy.

Lincoln's proclamation of April 15th, calling out seventy-five thousand militia, and summoning Congress into extra session on July 4th, was the administration's response to the forced evacuation of Fort Sumter. The sudden and immeasurable enthusiasm of which this proclamation was the occasion throughout the North was one of the greatest surprises in the history of the United States. Two days later Jefferson Davis replied by issuing a proclamation offering letters of marque to persons willing to aid the new government by making reprisals upon the commerce of the United States. On the 19th Lincoln rejoined by proclaiming a blockade of the ports of the seven states of the Confederacy, and declaring that if any person, under any pretence, should molest a vessel of the United States, or the persons or cargo on board of her, he should be treated as a pirate.²

In the first important despatch to William L. Dayton, our new Minister to France, on April 22d, Seward ac-

¹ Russell's *Diary*, 70, 71.

² On April 27th another proclamation announced an intention to extend the blockade to North Carolina and Virginia.

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known the necessity of force to put down the revolution. With the increase of danger at home, his expressions against foreign interference became stronger. Whatever else the President might consent to do, he would "never invoke or even admit foreign interference or influence in this or any other controversy in which the government of the United States may be engaged with any portion of the American people." After indicating that he had no apprehension of unfriendly action on the part of France, he recorded this warning to whom it might concern :

"Foreign intervention would oblige us to treat those who should yield it as allies of the insurrectionary party, and to carry on the war against them as enemies. The case would not be relieved, but, on the contrary, would only be aggravated, if several European states should combine in that intervention. The President and the people of the United States deem the Union, which would then be at stake, worth all the cost and all the sacrifices of a contest with the world in arms, if such a contest should prove inevitable."¹

A few days later Seward received an account of one of Faulkner's last conversations with Thouvenel, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs. Faulkner had told Thouvenel that the only solution of the difficulty between the North and the South would be to make alterations in the Constitution that would satisfy the seceding states, or peaceably to acquiesce in their assertion of sovereignty. The instructions of May 4th, to Dayton, who was then on his way to Paris, show that Seward's ideas had taken definite shape :

"You cannot be too decided or too explicit in making known to the French government that there is not now, nor has there been, nor will there be any the least idea existing in this government of suffering a dissolution of this Union to take place in any way whatever."

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 200.

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... "Tell Mr. Thouvenel, then, with the highest consideration and good feeling, that the thought of a dissolution of this Union, peaceably or by force, has never entered into the mind of any candid statesman here, and it is high time that it be dismissed by statesmen in Europe."¹

Faulkner's despatch and Seward's instructions were given to the press; and the *New York Times* of the 7th reported that stocks rose two per cent. on account of the Secretary's declarations and the evidence afforded by current events that the government was determined "to meet this rebellion with vigor and resolution." Seward had made his language more emphatic each week, hoping to counteract the growing opinion in Europe that the United States government was lacking in courage and resources.

But the most formidable danger was the activity that the diplomatic agents of the Confederacy were showing in Great Britain and in France. On March 16th William L. Yancey, Pierre A. Rost, and A. Dudley Mann were appointed special commissioners to those and other powers, for the purpose of securing recognition of the independence of the Confederate States and to negotiate treaties of friendship and commerce. Secretary Toombs instructed them that it was the confident expectation of the President and people of the Confederacy "that the enlightened government of Great Britain will speedily acknowledge our independence and welcome us among the nations of the world"; and that it was not regarded as "within the range of possibility" that the seceded states could be induced to re-enter the Union.² Yancey was primarily an orator and an agitator; he was a man

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 207, 208.

² Toombs to Yancey *et al.*, March 16th, 1861. MS. References to the MS. correspondence of all the Confederates are, unless otherwise stated, to the diplomatic archives of the Confederacy, in the United States Treasury Department.

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of fascinating manners, besides being a good representative of the slave-holding aristocracy. Rost was a Frenchman by birth, and, like Pierre Soulé, he early gained distinction at the Louisiana bar, and became a judge of the supreme court of the state. It was expected that he could effectively address his countrymen in their own language about their interests in the Confederacy, and especially in Louisiana. Mann had had much experience in both the diplomatic and the consular service of the United States. It was he that was sent on a special mission to Hungary when the Whig and the Democratic politicians pretended to be so eager to help her gain independence.

The commissioners reached London about the time the fall of Fort Sumter was reported. There had been a great change in public opinion during the past six months. Europe had watched secession spread from one locality to another, and from state to state, until it controlled a whole section and then organized itself into a confederation with a general government that was practically complete. No marked check had been put upon the movement by the United States. As Seward wrote: "Disunion, by surprise and impetuous passion, took the first successes, and profited by them to make public opinion in Europe."¹ Even the Sumter and the Pickens expeditions had evaded the main question as to whether the Washington government would reassert its authority over the whole country. The call for troops was the first decisive act. Many writers have taken more pains to formulate a grievance against Great Britain than to reach a fair understanding of the reason and growth of her conclusions at this time. The world knew that the seceding states were "thoroughly disaffected and insurrectionary"; and when northern leaders

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 51.

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like Douglas, supported by the official statement of the new Secretary of State, said that such states could not be subdued, Europe, and especially England, believed them. The revolution was so formidable, and apparently so complete, that all but comparatively few Englishmen concluded that a war against it would be unsuccessful, and therefore wrong. That such a man as Cobden shared this opinion is strong evidence that it was an honest conviction.¹ As has been said, "This state of public opinion was natural, and not a subject for complaint so much as for correction."²

Of course Great Britain and France had observed with a jealous eye our growth as a commercial rival; and it was with no pleasure that they had felt the expansive force of our boastful democracy. Irish-American agitators and blustering demagogues had done all they could to arouse the hatred of Englishmen. British conservatives, who feared the influence of democratic Liberals like Bright and Cobden, rejoiced when the greatest of democracies seemed to fail. Most Englishmen regarded high tariffs as acts of hostility, for they considered free-trade as a sort of international right. As far as commerce was concerned, the low tariff of the Confederacy quickly attracted sympathy. The French people had but little knowledge of the United States, because commercial and political relations between the two nations were not close. But there were, in fact, many French interests that would be injured by the disruption of the Union. It was, therefore, good policy for the United States to give prominence to this fact and to cultivate an international friendship, so as to make it difficult for Napoleon to pursue his dynastic schemes.

According to Faulkner's report, Thouvenel believed that the preservation of the Union would be beneficial

¹ 2 Morley's *Cobden*, 373.

² Henry Adams, *Historical Essays*, 269.

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to the North, to the South, and to France. But Thouvenel had also declared that "the practice and usage of the present century had fully established the right of *de facto* governments to recognition when a proper case was made out for the decision of foreign powers."¹ About the same time, Lord John Russell, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, assured George M. Dallas that there was no disposition to take any advantage of the unpleasant domestic troubles in the United States; but Dallas stated that English public opinion favored separation, and that it was expected that W. H. Gregory, a member of the House of Commons from Galway, would press a motion for the recognition of the Confederacy.² Early in May rumors of the issuance of letters of marque by the Confederacy, and of Lincoln's declaration of a blockade, reached London. Russell was much disturbed and requested Dallas to call. When Dallas appeared Russell informed him that the Confederate commissioners were in the city; that although they had not yet been seen, he was not unwilling to meet them "*unofficially*," and that France and Great Britain had agreed "to take the same course as to recognition, whatever that course might be," as Dallas reported.³ About the same date Russell announced in the House of Commons that a British naval force sufficient to protect British shipping was to be sent to the coast of the United States; and that it was the intention of the government to avoid taking any part in the American contest.⁴

When Seward learned these facts he became greatly excited. The agreement of the two great powers to act together seemed to be very threatening. It plainly indicated an expectation that by joint action they could safely pursue the policy best suited to their political and commercial interests. The evident assump-

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 205.

² *Dip. Cor.*, 84.

³ *Dip. Cor.*, 81, 83.

⁴ *Dip. Cor.*, 84, 85.

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tion was that their lead would be followed by other nations, and that the United States would not be able to resist the force of the current.¹ A letter Seward wrote home, May 17th, gives this strange account of himself and of his aims:

"A country so largely relying on my poor efforts to save it had [has] refused me the full measure of its confidence, needful to that end. I am a chief reduced to a subordinate position, and surrounded by a guard, to see that I do not do too much for my country, lest some advantage may revert indirectly to my own fame."

... "They have misunderstood things fearfully, in Europe. Great Britain is in great danger of sympathizing so much with the South, for the sake of peace and cotton, as to drive us to make war against her, as the ally of the traitors. If that comes it will be the strife of the younger branch of the British stock, for freedom, against the older, for slavery. It will be dreadful, but the end will be sure and swift. My last despatches from Great Britain and France have shown that they were almost ready, on some pretext, to try and save cotton, at the cost of the Union. I am trying to get a bold remonstrance through the Cabinet before it is too late."

The long despatch of May 21st, to Adams, was the result. It began with the declaration that our relations with European powers had reached a crisis, and that it was necessary for our government "to take a decided stand, on which not only its immediate measures but its ultimate and permanent policy can be determined and defined."² A few quotations will best indicate what this stand was:

"Intercourse of any kind with the so-called commissioners is liable to be construed as a recognition of the authority

¹ A few weeks later the British and the French Ministers at Washington agreed that the best way "of preventing an inconvenient outbreak from this [the United States] government lay in making the course of Great Britain and France as nearly as possible identical."—55 *British State Papers*, 557.

² Seward, 575.

³ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 87 ff.

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which appointed them. Such intercourse would be none the less hurtful to us for being called unofficial, and it might be even more injurious, because we should have no means of knowing what points might be resolved by it. Moreover, unofficial intercourse is useless and meaningless if it is not expected to ripen into official intercourse and direct recognition. . . . You will, in any event, desist from all intercourse whatever, unofficial as well as official, with the British government, so long as it shall continue intercourse of either kind with the domestic enemies of this country. When intercourse shall have been arrested for this cause, you will communicate with this department and receive further directions.”¹

Because the joint action of France and Great Britain had been already announced, but not put into practice, Seward doubtless inferred that a protest against it just then would be ineffectual, and therefore unwise. It was too late to treat it theoretically and too soon to deal with it as a serious problem. So it was noticed in friendly and somewhat vague sentences and left to the future.

“As to the blockade, you will say that by our own laws and the laws of nature, and the laws of nations, this government has a clear right to suppress insurrection. An exclusion of commerce from national ports which have been seized by insurgents, in the equitable form of blockade, is a proper means to that end. You will not insist that our blockade is to be respected, if it be not maintained by a competent force; but passing by that question as not now a practical or, at least, an urgent one, you will add that the blockade is now, and it will continue to be, so maintained, and therefore we expect it to be respected by Great Britain. You will add that we have already revoked the exequatur of a Russian consul who had enlisted in the military service of the insurgents, and we shall dismiss or demand the recall of every foreign agent, consular or diplomatic, who shall either disobey the Federal laws or disown the Federal authority.

“As to the recognition of the so-called Southern Confederacy, it is not to be made the subject of technical def-

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 88.

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initiation. It is, of course, direct recognition to publish an acknowledgment of the sovereignty and independence of a new power. It is direct recognition to receive its ambassadors, ministers, agents, or commissioners officially. A concession of belligerent rights is liable to be construed as a recognition of them. No one of these proceedings will pass unquestioned by the United States in this case. . . .

"As to the treatment of privateers in the insurgent service, you will say that this is a question exclusively our own. We treat them as pirates. They are our own citizens, or persons employed by our citizens, preying on the commerce of our country. If Great Britain shall choose to recognize them as lawful belligerents, and give them shelter from our pursuit and punishment, the laws of nations afford an adequate and proper remedy.¹

"These positions are not elaborately defended now, because to vindicate them would imply a possibility of our waiving them.

"We are not insensible of the grave importance of this occasion. We see how, upon the result of the debate in which we are engaged, a war may ensue between the United States and one, two, or even more European nations. War in any case is exceptional from the habits, as it is revolting from the sentiments of the American people. But if it come it will be fully seen that it results from the action of Great Britain, not our own; that Great Britain will have decided to fraternize with our domestic enemy either without waiting to hear from you our remonstrances and our warnings, or after having heard them. War in defence of national life is not immoral, and war in defence of independence is an inevitable part of the discipline of nations.

"The dispute will lie between the European and the American branches of the British race. All who belong to that race will especially deprecate it, as they ought. It may well be believed that men of every race and kindred will deplore it. A war not unlike it between the same parties occurred at the close of the last century. Europe atoned by forty years of suffering for the error that Great Britain committed in provoking that contest. If that nation shall now repeat the same great error, the social convulsions which will follow may not be so long, but they will

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 89.

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be more general. When they shall have ceased, it will, we think, be seen, whatever may have been the fortunes of other nations, that it is not the United States that will have come out of them with its precious Constitution altered, or its honestly obtained dominions in any degree abridged. Great Britain has but to wait a few months, and all her present inconveniences will cease with all our own troubles. If she take a different course she will calculate for herself the ultimate as well as the immediate consequences, and will consider what position she will hold when she shall have forever lost the sympathies and affections of the only nation on whose sympathies and affections she has a natural claim. In making that calculation she will do well to remember that in the controversy she proposes to open we shall be actuated by neither pride, nor passion, nor cupidity, nor ambition; but we shall stand simply on the principle of self-preservation, and that our cause will involve the independence of nations and the rights of human nature."¹

7 The instructions as sent differed in several important respects from their original form. The "remonstrance" laid before the Cabinet was "bold" to the point of defiance. It contained words and sentences that would have warranted the inference that we desired war. Seward's plan was that Adams should give Russell a copy of this paper and then break off diplomatic relations with the British government, a rupture that should last as long as Russell continued to hold either official or unofficial intercourse "with the domestic enemies of this country." There had been wisdom in Seward's candid warnings that intervention would mean war, but hitherto he had been careful to keep diplomatic relations open so as to prevent matters from reaching a crisis. As yet he had no knowledge that Russell intended to do more than receive the commissioners unofficially. To assume that a serious offence has been committed, and then to send what is practically an ultimatum, and to cut off diplo-

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 90.

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matic intercourse, is generally regarded as the sort of bullying that a spirited nation must resent. Fortunately, Lincoln was as calm and firm as on April 1st. What he rejected then was not to be approved now, when it returned in a different form. He struck out most of the indiscreet expressions, and made the whole despatch harmless by directing Adams to regard it as strictly confidential. This placed a safe buffer between the British and the United States Secretaries.¹

Seward had again fallen victim to the incomprehensible illusion that if, contrary to his firm belief, the Confederacy could not be peacefully undermined and negotiated out of existence, then a foreign war would be a "sure and swift" means of overcoming the difficulties. Of course he did not, in the abstract, desire a foreign war any more than he did a civil one; but he had the greatest fear of a conflict with the South, whereas he would not have hesitated to fight a few of the great powers of Europe. The only theory on which this illusion can be explained, even from his point of view, is that by giving full play to his imagination he was strengthened in the belief that the Union could not be restored unless the "chief" could get free from his "subordinate position" and push aside the "guard" that was preventing him from doing too much for his country, and that all could be accomplished by means of a foreign war, which would put him in control, because it would grow out of questions within the province of his duties. He was reasoning as if the best way to surmount great obstacles were to make them twice or thrice as great. On the other hand, those who have tried to make it appear that Lincoln was a great diplomatist because he pruned and altered Seward's draft,

¹ For the copies of the original draft, with Lincoln's alterations and comments, see 4 Nicolay and Hay, 470 ff., and 142 *North American Review*, 405 ff.

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have begun their measurements from the wrong point. In this instance it was Seward's recklessness,—not Lincoln's wisdom,—that was remarkable. Lincoln here acted as Seward's sober second thought, just as Seward had been Lincoln's in the inaugural address, and was to be again, still more distinctly, in dealing with the *Trent* affair.

A passage from a letter Seward wrote to Weed, May 23d, shows that the Secretary was in a highly nervous and unjudicial state of mind :

"The European phase is bad. But your apprehension that I may be too decisive alarms me more. Will you consent, or advise us to consent, that Adams and Dayton have audiences and compliments in the Minister's Audience Chamber, and Toombs' emissaries have access to his bedroom? Shall there be no compromise at home, and shall we compromise everything in Europe? Private recognition gives currency to southern bonds."¹

As far as the Secretary of State had learned, Great Britain was still considering whether the declaration of a blockade and the issuance of letters of marque called for any official action on her part.

It was about the middle of April that Lincoln and his Cabinet first began to discuss among themselves the relative advantages of attempting to close Confederate ports by law or proclamation, or to put them under naval blockade. A majority preferred to pronounce them closed, as the best means of weakening the Confederates without seeming to acknowledge a state of war.² But the President had no power to do this in time of peace, and Congress was not to meet for nearly three months. If there was no way to cut off communications with the Confederacy except by resorting to a belligerent right, then the most effective right should be

¹ 2 Seward, 576.

² Welles, 122 ff.

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exercised. Seward favored a blockade because the rules governing it were positive and well known. And as the question was one belonging to his department, the Cabinet yielded to his advice.¹

According to international law, a blockade such as the United States proposed to adopt is permissible only between belligerents. Its purpose is to isolate and weaken an enemy. That this may be done effectively, the merchantmen of neutral nations may be stopped and searched on the high seas, and in case they bear contraband of war for the enemy, or are bound for a blockaded port, they may be seized and brought before a prize court for condemnation. In calling for privateers to destroy the United States merchantmen, which were extensive carriers of the goods of foreigners, the Confederacy was also resorting to a measure that is lawful only in time of war. It was evident that both governments intended to exercise these special prerogatives. The prosecution of the respective plans of the Washington and the Montgomery governments was sure to have a very important influence upon the interests of all maritime nations. When arguing another question, subsequently, but speaking of the status as early as April 24, 1861, Seward said that "we supposed the French government would naturally feel a deep anxiety about the safety of their commerce, threatened distinctly with privateering by the insurgents."² Writing to Adams, May 28, 1862, about "the position which the Federal government held a year ago," Seward declared: "Then it had been practically expelled, with all its authorities, civil, military, and naval, from every state south of the Potomac, Ohio, and Missouri rivers, while it was held in close siege in this capital, cut off from communication with even the states which had remained loyal."³

¹ Welles, 123.

² *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 232.

³ *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 102.

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Before it became definitely known that a blockade had been declared and that privateers had been called for, Dallas reported that on May 1st Russell had "acquiesced in the expediency of disregarding mere rumor and waiting the full knowledge to be brought by my successor."¹ This was subsequently misrepresented, and has often been stated historically as a positive promise to delay action until Adams's arrival, however well the rumors might be confirmed or however pressing political or commercial considerations might become.

Authoritative reports of the American proclamations led Russell to decide by May 6th that the British government was bound to recognize that the parties to the conflict were in a position "to claim the rights and to perform the obligations attaching to belligerents."² So on May 13th—the day Adams reached London, and before he had time to call at the Foreign Office—the British proclamation of neutrality was issued. It announced the government's purpose to preserve a strict neutrality in the hostilities "unhappily commenced between the government of the United States and certain states styling themselves the Confederate States of America." British subjects were warned that any violation of this neutrality would incur certain penal consequences. The important point was that this document officially conceded belligerent rights to the Confederates. The other maritime powers waited for Great Britain to take the lead, because the extent of her dominions and commerce in North America made the question most important to her. Within a few weeks France, Spain, the Netherlands, Prussia, and other nations followed her example.

Throughout Seward's secretaryship he frequently repeated a long complaint against Great Britain on account of the alleged injustice of recognizing that a state

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 84.

² 55 *State Papers*, 548, 549.

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of war existed between the United States and the Confederate governments, and thousands of books and articles have reiterated his unsound reasoning. For him and the others who wrote in the excitement of the time, there is some excuse, but a subsequent generation should easily avoid his error. Great Britain was neither especially friendly nor especially unfriendly toward the United States: there was no occasion for either. The question of belligerency was one of fact, which had been settled by the respective acts of the hostile governments. It remained for Great Britain and the other powers to recognize this fact at once or whenever it might suit their convenience and interests. Therefore, there was not the slightest obligation on Russell's part—after receiving reliable information as to what had taken place in America—to postpone a decision until he had heard Adams's argument. The temper in which Seward and Adams argued the question would seem to indicate that Russell showed superior diplomacy by doing all he could to avoid discussing the merits of a course that he knew would be taken in any case. If Great Britain had wished to manifest marked friendship for the United States, instead of assuming a position of strict neutrality, she had a good opportunity to do so by delaying action, and thereby influencing other nations to do the same. Although neither of the American governments had any substantial basis for expecting positive assistance, it will be seen again and again in the course of this narrative that it was the disappointment of this expectation that inspired the most frequent and bitter complaints on the part of each belligerent.¹

¹ The following letter of July 12, 1861, from Lord John Russell to Edward Everett is an accurate exposition of the opinions—some sound, others erroneous—that controlled the action of the British government during the first few months of the Civil War:

. . . "In the interval before a fresh item arises I will write a few
H.—M

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By the time the despatch of May 21st reached England, the United States Ministers in London and in Paris respectively had concluded that the sympathy with the Confederacy was much less positive than they had supposed. They were informed that it was the custom of both France and Great Britain unofficially to receive such envoys as the Confederate commissioners, and to hear what they had to say.¹ Russell told Adams that

lines as to our position. I shall say little as to yours. I respect the unanimous feeling of the North, and still more the resolutions not to permit the extension of slavery which led to the election of President Lincoln. But with regard to our course, I must say something more. There were, according to your account, eight million of free men in the slave states. Of these millions upwards of five have been for some time in open revolt against the President and Congress of the United States. It is not our practice to treat five millions of free men as pirates and to hang their sailors if they attempt to stop our merchantmen. (But unless we meant to treat them as pirates and to hang them we could not deny them belligerent rights.) This is what you and we did in the case of the South American colonies of Spain. Your own President and courts of law decided this question in the case of Venezuela. Your press has studiously confused the case by calling the allowance of belligerent rights by the name of recognition. But you must well know the difference.

"It seems to me, however, that you have expected us to discourage the South. How this was to be done, except by waging war against them, I am at a loss to imagine.

"I confess, likewise, that I can see no good likely to arise from the present contest. If on the 4th of March you had allowed the Confederate States to go out from among you you could have prevented the extension of slavery and confined it to the slave-holding states. But if I understand your Constitution aright you cannot do more in case of successful war, if you mean to adhere to its provisions and to keep faith with those states and parts of states, wherever slavery still exists, which have not quitted the Union.

"I regret the Morrill tariff and hope it will be repealed. But the exclusion of our manufactures was surely an odd way of conciliating our good-will."—MS.

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 104, 219. In an unprinted portion of the latter despatch, Dayton reported: "Besides, he [Thouvenel] said, he had received him [Rost] because he felt it a duty to get all the information he could and obtain knowledge of facts, in reference to matters of so

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he had seen the commissioners but twice, and had no expectation of seeing them again.¹ Adams inferred that Russell meant this to be satisfactory to our government. He also suggested that, since her Britannic Majesty's Ministers had manifested a desire to modify the effects of their early precipitation, a corresponding tone would be advisable on the part of the Department of State.² But before these opinions became known in Washington, Seward had recovered his balance and was penning friendly, even courtly, sentences to be read to Russell and to Thouvenel.³ (Perhaps he remembered that he himself had recently communicated, through three different intermediaries, with the Confederate commissioners to Washington, and would have met them if the President had not forbidden it. If the thought occurred to him that the intercourse might be no more profitable in one instance than it had been in the other, it was evidence of increasing wisdom. In any case he seems to have given up forever his irrational theory of the salutary effect of a foreign war.

Americans would not have been so much alarmed had they not, at first, failed to comprehend just what the granting of belligerent rights meant. They also feared that the proclamation of neutrality was the beginning of a policy designed to help the Confederacy. The rush of events and the inaccuracy of reports prevented many even of the wisest men from forming correct opinions. When, on June 1, 1861, Great Britain issued an order in-

much importance, from all possible sources. That for this purpose he had received all sorts of people. That on the same day he had received envoys from Garibaldi and the King of Naples. Besides this, he wished, he said, to inform Mr. Rost of the inutility of now seeking from the French government a recognition of the independence of the Southern Confederates."

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 104.

² Adams to Seward, June 14, 1861. MS.

³ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 98, 101, 221.

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terdicting "the armed ships, and also the privateers, of both parties, from carrying prizes made by them into the ports, harbors, roadsteads, or waters of the United Kingdom, or of any of her Majesty's colonies or possessions abroad," it was seen that this could not have been prompted by partiality toward the Confederacy. "The notification is, in fact, an act of effective hostility against the South," said the *New York Times*, June 18th. It was a foregone conclusion that other nations would issue similar decrees. Excluded from foreign ports, and kept out of their own by the blockade, where could Confederates take their prizes? If the reward should become very doubtful, privateers would not long remain on the ocean. Seward expected that it would be a death-blow to Confederate privateering, and within a year he reported to Adams that the "pirates" had withdrawn.¹ Early in June, 1861, it was announced that Gregory's movement in the House of Commons to obtain the recognition of the Confederacy had been abandoned;² but this was not true.

These were manifestations of a decline of sympathy with the Confederacy, but there was no certain indication that Great Britain and France might not, in their own interests, take measures that would be very injurious to the cause of the Union. In fact, on June 15, 1861, they made their first attempt to carry out their plan of joint action—not to aid the new government, but to protect themselves. The French and the British Ministers appeared at the Department of State and asked to be received together. Knowing what this meant, Seward had them shown into the Assistant Secretary's room. He soon entered, smiling and shaking his head as he protested: "No, no. This will never do. I cannot see

¹ Bernard's *Neutrality of Great Britain*, 133; *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 101.

² *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 103.

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you in that way." One Minister suggested that they were carrying out their instructions, and the other urged that they should be allowed to state the object of their call. "No," said Seward, "we must start right about it, whatever it is. M. Mercier, will you do me the favor to come to dine with me this evening? There we can talk over your business at leisure. And if Lord Lyons will step into my room with me, now, we will discuss what he has to say to me." They pleasantly objected to the plan, but Seward positively declined to receive them together. Then he asked them to leave their papers, that he might examine them informally.¹ "Mr. Seward's language and demeanor throughout the interview were calm, friendly, and good-humored," as Lyons reported to Russell.²

In looking over the documents he learned that the two governments intended to ask both the United States and the Confederacy to adopt certain rules making the property of neutrals and that of an enemy (if under a neutral flag) free from capture, when not contraband of war. This was also the first attempt to announce directly to the United States that they were divided into two belligerent parties, between which other powers assumed the attitude of neutrals. To allow this plan to be carried out would have been an acquiescence both in the position of France and Great Britain toward the Confederacy and in their scheme to act jointly. Therefore, Seward promptly handed back the communications and would not allow them to be formally presented. This was one of the first positive signs Seward gave of talent for his new duties. There was diplomatic skill of the best quality in the way he thwarted the purposes of Russell and Thouvenel.

¹ This account closely follows that of Mr. F. W. Seward, who seems to have been present.—2 Seward, 581; *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 106.

² 55 *State Papers*, 560.

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The official explanations Seward made to Adams and to Dayton were strong, dignified, and in proper temper. To one he said :

“The United States are still solely and exclusively sovereign within the territories they have lawfully acquired and long possessed, as they have always been. . . . They are living under the obligations of the law of nations, and of treaties with Great Britain, just the same now as heretofore ; they are, of course, the friend of Great Britain, and they insist that Great Britain shall remain their friend now, just as she has hitherto been. Great Britain, by virtue of these relations, is a stranger to parties and sections in this country, whether they are loyal to the United States or not, and Great Britain can neither rightfully qualify the sovereignty of the United States, nor concede, nor recognize any rights, or interests, or power of any party, state, or section, in contravention to the unbroken sovereignty of the Federal Union.”¹

He would not enter into any argument of fact or of law ; for the position was one of self-defence—“the primary law of human action.” The government was sensible of the importance of the step it had taken, and it still hoped that friendly relations might continue. He expressed a belief that Great Britain had acted inadvertently or from exaggerated apprehensions of danger to her commerce. He claimed that all that Great Britain then asked as a neutral had already been offered her as a friend.²

“We are anxious,” he said, “to avoid all causes of misunderstanding with Great Britain ; to draw closer, instead of breaking, the existing bonds of amity and friendship. There is nothing good or great which both nations may not expect to attain or effect, if they remain friends. It would be a hazardous day for both the branches of the British race when they should determine to try how much harm each could do the other.”³

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 107.

² This refers to the offer of the United States to accede to the declaration of Paris, which will soon be noticed. ³ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 108.

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Great Britain had also offered her services as mediator. Adams was instructed to say that the United States could not "solicit or accept mediation from any, even the most friendly quarter."

Seward said that the fountains of discontent in every society were many, but that as yet only those lying nearest the surface had been disturbed. If the deeper ones should be opened, when could they be closed? And then he concluded his impressive despatch with this very significant sentence: "It was foreign intervention that opened, and that alone could open, similar fountains in the memorable French revolution."¹

One passage in the despatch to Dayton was peculiarly eloquent in expressing his determination to resist foreign interference, which he feared was coming:

"Every uncorrupted nation, in its deliberate moments, prefers its own integrity, even with unbearable evils, to division through the power or influence of any foreign state. This is so in France. It is not less so in this country. Down deep in the heart of the American people—deeper than the love of trade, or of freedom—deeper than the attachment to any local or sectional interest, or partisan pride or individual ambition—deeper than any other sentiment—is that one out of which the Constitution of this Union arose—namely, American Independence—independence of all foreign control, alliance, or influence."²

In an unpublished despatch of July 1, 1861, to Dayton, he made his clearest and most characteristic explanation of what the attitude of the government must be in regard to the action of the foreign nations that had recognized the belligerency of the "insurgents":

"Neither Great Britain nor France, separately nor both together, can, by any declaration they can make, impair the sovereignty of the United States over the insurgents, nor confer upon them any public rights whatever. From first to last we have acted, and we shall continue to act,

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 109.

² *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 228.

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for the whole people of the United States, and to make treaties for disloyal as well as loyal citizens with foreign nations, and shall expect, when the public welfare requires it, foreign nations to respect and observe the treaties.

("We do not admit, and we never shall admit, even the fundamental statement you assume—namely, that Great Britain and France have recognized the insurgents as a belligerent party. True, you say they have so declared. We reply: Yes, but they have not declared so to us. You may rejoin: Their public declaration concludes the fact. We, nevertheless, reply: It must be not their declaration, but the fact, that concludes the fact.")

It was probably a surprise to Seward that Thouvenel and Russell made no complaint on account of his refusal to entertain their propositions. The fact was that these statesmen had come to a better understanding of the problems in hand. Although Thouvenel had told Rost that recognition was merely a matter of time, the commissioners early concluded that Great Britain would take no final action until after the first decided Confederate success.¹ On June 10th Rost and Yancey wrote from Paris: "Our opinion is that the government of England simply waits to see which shall prove strongest, and that it is sincere in its expressed design to be neutral." They thought that all they could do was to influence public sentiment in an unobtrusive manner until some favorable event at home should furnish an occasion for them to press for recognition. On July 15th Yancey and Mann reported that Napoleon considered his European policy so important to France that he would wait to follow Great Britain's lead on the American question. It is uncertain how much Seward's threats had to do with the apparent moderation or caution of either government. Adams believed that Great Britain's inclination to enter into negotiations with the Confederates would have been yielded to "in regular

¹ Commissioners to Toombs, May 21, 1861. MS.

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course of time but for the warning which came from the other side of the Atlantic against precipitation. In lieu of the former rashness has come a proportionate timidity."¹

About the time Seward thought he had got rid of the most troublesome questions, a new one arose, although it was as yet merely theoretical. The administration had chosen the blockade as the surest way to weaken the Confederacy; but many continued to believe that it was a mistake to try to watch a coast three thousand miles in length. If the ports could be closed effectively by law, then the ships so widely scattered could be brought together and used to conquer southern cities and districts on the seaboard; and this would prevent the Confederates from concentrating their strength in front of Washington. It was understood that Great Britain and France would not respect an attempt to close the ports by proclamation. A civil war was then in progress in New Granada, and the government in that country had adopted this method against its insurgents. Russell told Adams that the British Cabinet, after considering this case, had decided that in the event of insurrection or civil war, a country could not close the ports that were *de facto* in the possession of the insurgents; for that would not be a blockade according to international law.² Before Adams's report of this conversation reached the United States, Congress had authorized President Lincoln to close the ports held by the Confederates. It does not appear that Seward then wished the President to declare a paper blockade in this indirect way, but he considered it his duty to let no claimed right seem to lapse by failing to deny the British dictum. What he did was to inform Great Britain

¹ Adams to Seward, June 21, 1861. MS.

² *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 111.

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that the law merely granted the authority; that the President approved the principle of the law, and would exercise the power whenever the safety of the nation required it.

This was not asserted pugnaciously, but only with such clearness as suited the circumstances. Of course, he made it plain again that fear of war would not prevent the United States from exercising their rights, but even this was not said until after he had significantly and diplomatically remarked :

“I may add, also, for myself, that however otherwise I may at any time have been understood, it has been an earnest and profound solicitude to avert foreign war that alone has prompted the emphatic and sometimes, perhaps, impassioned remonstrances I have hitherto made against any form or measure of recognition of the insurgents by the government of Great Britain. I write in the same spirit now, and I invoke on the part of the British government, as I propose to exercise on my own, the calmness which all counsellors ought to practise in debates which involve the peace and happiness of mankind.”¹

This despatch bore the date of July 21, 1861 — the day of the first battle of Bull Run. He said that he could not close without again asking Great Britain to realize that the policy of the government was “based on interests of the greatest importance and sentiments of the highest virtue, and, therefore, is in no case likely to be changed, whatever may be the varying fortunes of the war at home or the actions of foreign nations on this subject, while the policy of foreign states rests on ephemeral interests of commerce and ambition merely. The policy of the United States is not a creature of the government, but an inspiration of the people, while the policies of foreign states are at the choice mainly of the governments presiding over them.”²

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 118.

² *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 121.

CHAPTER XXXI

TWO DIPLOMATIC INCIDENTS: SEWARD AND THE DECLARATION OF PARIS; BRITISH AND FRENCH "NEGOTIATIONS" WITH THE CONFEDERACY

It was inevitable that the differences of opinion as to the belligerency of the Confederacy would lead to other disagreements. In fact, nearly a month before any power had formally recognized that belligerency Seward formed a plan by which he hoped to remove all excuse for such action. But, after recognition, other steps naturally followed, and these were the cause of discussions in which much cleverness was displayed by the diplomatists on each side.

A congress of the leading maritime powers of Europe, held in Paris in 1856, agreed to the following rules, which are commonly called the declaration of Paris:

"1. Privateering is and remains abolished.

"2. The neutral flag covers enemy's goods, with the exception of contraband of war.

"3. Neutral goods, with the exception of contraband of war, are not liable to capture under enemy's flag.

"4. Blockades, in order to be binding, must be effective; that is to say, maintained by forces sufficient really to prevent access to the coast of the enemy."

As the first three provisions were not well-established rules of international law, and were binding only upon the contracting nations, the other maritime states were invited to adopt them. In replying for the United States, Secretary Marcy pointed out several reasons why they

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could not be accepted by his country without disadvantage, unless certain alterations should be made. The first article was objected to, because the United States had not adopted the policy of keeping a large navy in time of peace, and, therefore, might find it important to use privateers in case of war. But it could be rendered acceptable, Marcy suggested, if all the private property of individuals, though belonging to belligerent nations, should be made exempt from seizure or confiscation in maritime war.¹ All efforts toward a realization of Marcy's plan were unsuccessful. Buchanan's administration broke off the negotiations.

Shortly after the fall of Fort Sumter, when the questions of belligerency and of issuing letters of marque by the Confederacy arose, Seward saw that it might be advantageous to the United States to change their position. Because the Confederacy had no merchant marine worth mentioning, probably the United States would have no occasion to send out privateers. Therefore, as far as the present conflict was concerned, the United States had practically nothing to lose by agreeing to abolish privateering. On the other hand, it was expected that much of the naval success of the Confederacy must depend on the destruction of northern merchantmen. Confederate privateers would also interfere with the goods of Europeans, especially when carried under our flag. If these privateers could be kept off the ocean, it would save the maritime nations much annoyance. Assuming that the adherence of the United States to the declaration of Paris would bring about this result, it was to be expected that the other powers would welcome such a step. Here, then, Seward believed that he had a great opportunity to gain the advantages already

¹ Stated more fully in Marcy's instructions to the United States Minister to Belgium, July 14, 1856. MS. See also *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 34, 232.

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mentioned, and a much greater one, of which he was careful not to speak at the beginning.

On April 24, 1861, he instructed our Ministers to the leading European powers that the United States were willing to assent to the declaration pure and simple, if the Marcy amendment should not be acceptable.¹ He told Dayton that two motives induced the United States to assume this position, as far as France was concerned: "First, a sincere desire to co-operate with other progressive nations in the melioration of the rigors of maritime war; second, a desire to relieve France of any apprehension of danger to the lives or property of her people from violence to occur in the course of the civil conflict in which we are engaged."² A further motive is to be found in another despatch, which says: "In this way we expected to remove every cause that any foreign power could have for the recognition of the insurgents as a belligerent power."³

The parties to the declaration of Paris agreed that they would make common cause among themselves in enforcing its articles. Some months after the original proposal of accession was made, Seward said that "we tendered it, of course, as the act of this Federal government, to be obligatory equally upon disloyal as upon loyal citizens."⁴ It did not require the gift of prophecy to tell what would result in case the offer of accession on the part of the United States should be accepted.

The governments of Great Britain and of France seemed to receive the proposition with favor, although the Queen's proclamation had already recognized the belligerency of the Confederacy when this subject was first presented. Lord John Russell gave Adams to understand that Lord Lyons had been authorized to enter into a similar agreement with our government.

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 84-86.

² *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 233.

³ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 251.

⁴ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 232.

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Dayton early foresaw difficulties. Very ingenuously he suggested to Seward that, since the British government had shut its ports against the Confederate privateers, and thereby greatly limited their privileges, the accession of the United States to the declaration had become less urgent; and that because European nations had recognized the belligerency of the Confederacy, our becoming a party to the declaration would not affect that action.¹

This was exactly what Seward did not wish to hear mentioned. So he very pointedly indicated to Dayton that he was reasoning from false premises in adopting the plea that the insurgents "were necessarily a belligerent power because the British and French governments have chosen in some of their public papers to say they are so."² At the same time he distinctly informed Dayton that this was not to alter the purpose of the administration in regard to the declaration. It was Seward's nature to increase in persistency as the obstacles became greater. So both Adams and Dayton were directed to press forward with their tasks. "But in doing this," he said to Dayton, "you will neither unnecessarily raise a question about the character in which this government acts (being exclusive sovereign) nor, on the other hand, in any way compromise that character in any degree."³ This was significant.

The foreign diplomatists had their eyes open from the start. On May 18th Russell wrote to Lord Lyons that her Majesty's government could not accept an offer on the part of the United States not to do any privateering, "if coupled with the condition that they should enforce its renunciation upon the Confederate States, either by denying their right to issue letters of marque,

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 220.

² Seward to Dayton, July 1, 1861. MS.

³ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 234.

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or by interfering with the belligerent operations of vessels holding from them such letters of marque."¹ A fortnight later Lord Lyons said that it was undoubtedly the purpose of the United States to make the parties to the declaration treat the Confederates as pirates;² and Thouvenel early saw that this would be a logical demand.

However, on July 18, 1861, Russell informed Adams that the British government would be ready to enter into a convention with the United States about their accession to the declaration, as soon as the United States should be prepared to make a similar agreement with France.³ Conventions of identical import were drafted at London and at Paris, and were ready for signature; then there came a sudden halt. Dayton, who had been severely criticised by Seward, had the melancholy satisfaction of reporting to the department that his "anticipations" had been "fully realized"; for Russell and Thouvenel had each refused to negotiate except on the distinct understanding—and a written statement at the time of completing the arrangement—that the admission of the United States to the declaration should have no bearing, directly or indirectly, on the question of our domestic difficulty.⁴ The British and the French Secretaries clearly explained the reason for their demand: their governments had recognized the Confederates as belligerents, and were bound to respect their right to arm vessels as privateers, while the United States had insisted upon regarding the privateers as pirates; therefore the United States might claim that all the parties to a convention "declaring that privateering was and remains abolished would be bound to treat the privateers of the so-called Confederate States as pirates." Both Russell and Thouvenel feared that,

¹ 55 *British State Papers*, 555.

² *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 116.

³ *Ibid.*, 557.

⁴ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 242.

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without an explicit statement in advance, the agreement would lead straight to a dispute.¹ The British Secretary emphasized the importance of such precaution by referring to the serious differences that had occurred about "the precise meaning of words and the intention of" those who made the Clayton-Bulwer treaty. The illustration was very pointed, so far as Seward was concerned; for, as has been noticed, he had argued on both sides of this troublesome question.

Seward's replies showed that he felt little less than contempt for the reasoning of his two great opponents. To admit a special explanation would virtually introduce a new and distinct article into the projected convention; it "would, for the first time in the history of the United States, be to permit a foreign power to take cognizance of and adjust its relations upon assumed internal and purely domestic differences existing within our own country."² He also considered the proposition to be an unjust discrimination against the United States, because it aimed to treat the conditions here as exceptional, without making a like provision for similar circumstances in other countries in the future. The point was that there should be no distinction between a nation with a formidable insurrection and a nation that might some time have one. Nor would he admit that the acceptance of the plain proposition of the United States would in any way involve the other powers in our internal affairs.

"But if such should be its effect, I must, in the first place, disclaim any desire for such an intervention on the part of the United States. The whole of this long correspondence has had for one of its objects the purpose of averting any such intervention. If, however, such an intervention would be the result of the unqualified execution of the convention by France, then the fault clearly must

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 145, 146, 242, 252.

² *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 142.

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be inherent in the declaration of the congress of Paris itself, and it is not a result of anything that the United States have done or proposed."¹

It must often have been noticed, in the course of this narrative, that Seward had a fondness for an argument of this kind. It was delightfully theoretical, and superficially it seemed to be conclusive, although it avoided the main question. On July 6, 1861, he called on Lord Lyons and explained the complications, as he viewed them, in which Dayton had involved the negotiations. He was very anxious that the accession of the United States to the declaration should at once take place, saying that its effect upon the states in revolt could be determined afterward. At the same time he assured the British Minister that the United States would do all in their power to protect the commerce of friends from the attacks of the so-called privateers, and would hang the privateer crews as pirates. If Seward had not intended to use the adherence of the United States to the declaration as a lever to force the other powers to treat the Confederates as pirates, or at least to cease regarding them as belligerents, he might easily and unofficially have removed all such suspicions. On the contrary, the interview strengthened Lyons's fears; so that he gave Russell the most emphatic warning that the only way to prevent "serious disputes" in the future would be to state "formally and distinctly beforehand" what the effect would be on the Confederacy.* Probably it was this advice that caused Russell to insist on the explanatory declaration.

It is difficult either to understand how Seward could have expected Russell and Thouvenel to walk into such a trap in broad daylight, or how he could have profited

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 251.

* 55 *State Papers*, 566-67.

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by it in any case. They would not have accepted his theory of the significance of the accession of the United States, and this would only have made more conspicuous our connivance at the European recognition of Confederate belligerency. Seward's claim, that there was no difference between a nation entirely at peace and one in circumstances like those of the United States at this time, could not be taken seriously. It was the difference between a solvent man and an insolvent one, between recognized sovereignty and disputed sovereignty, between peace and war. This was shown by the indisputable fact that it was not possible for the United States to prevent the fitting out of privateers by the Confederates. Every other nation had the ability, when it became a party to the declaration, to carry out its pledges. For Seward to grant for the moment that it would be interference on the part of other powers to deal with Confederate privateersmen as if they were pirates, and then to pretend that, therefore, he could have had no such idea in mind, was to belie the chief purpose of his arguments for months. Dayton again summarized the whole situation when he wrote to Thouvenel: "If, therefore, the government of France shall consider that an unconditional execution of that convention will demand of it interference in our affairs, or will implicate it in any shape in the civil war now raging in our country, then it is obvious that this is not a proper time for her or for us to enter into such agreements."¹ There is nothing to indicate that Seward would have accepted anything less than "the unconditional execution of that convention." Therefore, he was plainly acting out of season, and he was furnishing his opponents with evidences of his lack of candor.

These contentions were all the more unfortunate be-

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 247.

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cause they lessened the good results that would naturally have followed a wise and generous policy toward neutrals, which had doubtless been in Seward's mind from the beginning.

"Regarding this negotiation as at an end," he wrote to Adams, "the question arises, What, then, are to be the views and policy of the United States in regard to the rights of neutrals in maritime war in the present case? . . . We regard Great Britain as a friend. Her Majesty's flag, according to our traditional principles, covers enemy's goods not contraband of war. Goods of her Majesty's subjects, not contraband of war, are exempt from confiscation, though found under a neutral or disloyal flag. No depredations shall be committed by our naval forces or by those of any of our citizens, so far as we can prevent it, upon the vessels or property of British subjects. Our blockade, being effective, must be respected."¹

Here was the full assent of the United States, for the present war, to all except the first article of the declaration of Paris. It was gracefully given at last, and it must have been welcomed. Such an announcement, accompanied by the statement that Seward withdrew "from the subject carrying away no feelings of passion, prejudice, or jealousy," and a discreet reminder of the fact that in 1838 the United States passed a law to prevent their citizens from interfering with the Canadian rebellion, must have gone far toward allaying the ill-feelings that had been aroused.

It should not be inferred from what has been said of Seward that Russell and Thouvenel were altogether artless and frank. The commercial interests of their nations were greatly affected by our struggle, and their constant aim was to find out how far these interests could be protected or benefited without getting into more serious

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 143.

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~~unpopular~~ They seemed to have but little sentimental sympathy for either the North or the South. They hoped, but never felt quite confident, that the governments of France and Great Britain to act together would work much like an offensive and defensive alliance, by making their respective disputes with the United States practically identical because simultaneous.

Before Seward's proposition about the declaration of Paris had been made, Thouvenel and Russell had agreed on a plan that was better for French and British interests than the approval of all four articles of the declaration by both belligerents.¹ If the United States and the Confederacy could be induced to adopt the second and third articles—that a neutral flag protects an enemy's goods, and that the goods of a neutral are not subject to seizure even in an enemy's ship—contraband of war excepted in both cases—then the commerce of France and of Great Britain would be free from everything except slight annoyances. If Confederate privateers should roam the ocean and seize the ships and goods of citizens of the North, all the better for other commercial nations; for it would soon cause the commerce of the United States to be carried on under foreign flags, especially the British and the French. The rule of international law about blockades was so positive that no special approval of that article was necessary. This was the first important plan that the two powers tried to carry out by means of impressive joint action.

The parties to the declaration of Paris agreed that it could be accepted only as a whole, and that the acceding nations should enter into no subsequent arrangement on maritime law in time of war without stipulating for a strict adherence to the four articles. In direct vio-

¹ 55 *State Papers*, 547-50.

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lation of this pledge, Great Britain and France pursued their project, as these instructions from Russell to Lyons show: “Her Majesty’s government expect that these proposals will be received by the United States government in a friendly spirit. If such shall be the case, you will endeavor to come to an agreement on the subject, binding France, Great Britain, and the United States.”¹

It has been noticed² how Seward outwitted Lyons and Mercier when they called to submit this proposition. The communications with the Confederacy were less disappointing. Under date of July 5, 1861, Lord Lyons requested the British consul at Charleston, South Carolina, to get the Confederate government to consent to the observance of the two articles about the rights of neutrals. Lyons specially cautioned Consul Bunch against taking any action that might seem to raise the question of the recognition of the Confederacy by Great Britain, and he advised him neither to go to Richmond nor to deal directly “with the central authority which is established there.” He suggested that by explaining the matter verbally to Governor Pickens, the latter might be able to obtain from the Confederate government both an official recognition of the rights secured to neutrals by the two articles and an admission of responsibility for its privateers. Lyons also informed Bunch that similar instructions had been sent by the French government to its representative there, and that the two consuls were expected to act in “strict concert.”³

As Governor Pickens was absent from Charleston, the consuls secured the services of William Henry Trescot, who was an experienced diplomatist. The whole scheme was unfolded to him, and he set out for Richmond to

¹ 55 *State Papers*, 554.

² See *ante*, p. 180 ff.

³ Bernard’s *Neutrality of Great Britain, etc.*, 181, 182.

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interview the Confederate President. Davis was met at Gordonsville, returning from the first battle of Bull Run. As soon as Davis understood the proposition, he inquired why it had not come through his accredited commissioners. This was partially answered by reminding him that Yancey, Rost, and Mann had not yet been officially received, and that Seward had declared that in case they should be, the United States would regard it as a *casus belli*. The agent advised that the best way to bring about their reception would be for the President to let it be informally known that the proposal had been received with favor, and to say that the commissioners would give the official answer. It was suggested that this would probably lead to recognition; and if Seward's threat was meant, Great Britain and France would be brought into the war as the allies of the Confederacy. Davis's dissatisfaction with the way the negotiations had been opened seemed to cloud his perception of the possible advantage. But he may have thought that any attempt to go beyond the course suggested by the representatives of Great Britain and of France would react against the Confederacy. So he merely gave his general approval, and promised to refer the question to Congress.¹ On August 13th the Confederate Congress passed a series of resolutions approving all the articles of the declaration of Paris except the one referring to privateers. The "right of privateering" was especially emphasized.

The British consul rightly considered that the wishes of her Majesty's government had been "fully met"; for the abolition of privateering had not been requested. Bunch described privateering as "the arm upon which they [the Confederates] most rely for the injury of the

¹ This paragraph is based on Bunch's report (Bernard, 182-84) and the statements of Mr. Trescot to the author.

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extended commerce of their enemy." In any case, the special interests of France and Great Britain were shielded by the approval of the second and third articles. Toward the close of his despatch Consul Bunch spoke of "the accession of the Confederate States to the declaration of Paris," and added: "The negotiation¹ having thus been brought to a close, the President expressed to Mr. ——— [Trescot] his hope that the existence of those extended relations of commercial intercourse which had rendered the application now made to him by the governments of France and England a necessity in the view of those nations, would materially contribute to hasten a formal recognition of the new Confederacy. . . ."² This was certainly not the language one would expect to hear from the representative of a neutral power which had repeatedly declared its intention merely to recognize a state of war. Nor is it likely that any officer in the diplomatic service would have employed such incautious expressions, whatever the real position of his government. Bunch was merely a consul, and his vanity seems to have been highly excited by the unusual task given him. Later it appeared that he had expressed himself much more strongly.

Seward learned by chance of the doings of Consul Bunch. Early in August, 1861, he was informed by telegraph that one Robert Mure, of Charleston, was soon to sail from New York for England as bearer of despatches from the Confederate government to the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Mure was arrested, and in his possession were found papers indicating that Consul Bunch had been carrying on something like diplomatic negotiations with the Confederacy. One showed that he had declared that the first step toward recognition had been taken. Seward

¹ Lyons used the same word in his despatch to Bunch.

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reviewed the case, and instructed Adams to request that Bunch should be removed.¹

In reply to the charges, Earl Russell² said that Bunch had been directed to express to the authorities of the so-called Confederacy the desire of England and France that the second, third, and fourth articles of the declaration of Paris should be observed; that he had acted on instructions, and therefore could not be dismissed. Russell disclaimed all responsibility for the assertion that the first step to the recognition of the southern states by Great Britain had been taken; her Majesty's government had not recognized, and was not prepared to recognize, the so-called Confederate States as a separate independent state.³

Seward replied on October 23d that there was a law of the United States that forbade any person not specially appointed or duly recognized by the President from taking part in any political correspondence with the government of any foreign state whatever, with an intent to influence the measures of a foreign government. Moreover, the proper persons to represent the interests of Great Britain were the diplomatic agents; nor could the United States government permit an officer exercising consular privileges by its consent to hold communications with the insurgents. Russell had implied that because Great Britain had recognized the Confederates as belligerents, she might properly treat with them in regard to the rights of neutrals. As far as Seward's attitude was concerned, this was like undertaking to strengthen a disputed claim by increasing its scope and significance; it made a denial all the more urgent. Seward boldly reasserted his determination to

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 181-83.

² He had recently become an earl; but, because he preferred it, he continued to be called by his former title.

³ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 156, 157.

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maintain his position toward the Confederates and not to permit Great Britain to free herself from any of her obligations to the United States. "Still adhering to this position, the government of the United States will continue to pursue, as it has heretofore done, the counsels of prudence, and will not suffer itself to be disturbed by excitement. It must revoke the exequatur of the consul, who has not only been the bearer of communications between the insurgents and a foreign government, in violation of our laws, but has abused equally the confidence of the two governments by reporting, without the authority of his government, and in violation of their own policy as well as of our national rights, that the proceeding in which he was engaged was in the nature of a treaty with the insurgents, and the first step towards a recognition by Great Britain of their sovereignty."¹

He made his victory more complete and less irritating by paying a compliment to Lord Lyons because he had "carefully respected the sovereignty and the rights of the United States," and by saying that the consular privileges that had been taken from Bunch would be "cheerfully allowed to any successor whom her Majesty may appoint, against whom no grave personal objections shall exist." Adams, with perfect tact,

¹ "Secondly, the communication of the British and French governments to the insurgent cabal at Richmond through Mr. Bunch was a proceeding that could not fail to alarm the American government and people. When the fact happened to become known to us, I had just become satisfied, though in confidential communications, that the British government was prepared to assume a tone that should repel the prevailing presumption of its inclinations to a recognition. But the offensive correspondence of the British government left us no alternative but to exercise our right to revoke the exequatur of the offending consul. It was done, however, on the grounds of his having rendered himself personally obnoxious."—Seward to Adams, November 30, 1861. MS.

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MINISTER OF STATE IN 1861. Russell re-
peatedly affirmed his opinion that the only authority in
the United States to which any diplomatic communica-
tion whatever might be made was the government of
the United States, as never to receive objection both on
measures of any kind at all. He considered it unrea-
sonable either to address the United States concerning
some grievance in New Orleans or elsewhere, which it
was not within the power of the United States govern-
ment to remove, or to submit to any serious hardship,
which it undoubtedly, thought attempting to have the
Confederacy address it over its head.

LEADS VARIOUS OF THE HOWS WITH SKILL. If Russell's
argument in regard to Great Britain's grievances against
the Confederacy was not as he himself had meant
that he thought the same diplomatic agents should be
accredited to the United States and to the authorities
organized for their government. No self-respecting
nation would admit such a practice. It was entirely
true as Russell suggested that cases might arise in
New Orleans and elsewhere which the United States
government would not remedy. But in bringing for-
ward such an argument he was taking up a two-edged
sword. There are many injuries suffered by a nation's
subjects in a foreign country which can only be corrected
or compensated for after long periods of delay. With
the sagacity and perfect diplomacy Adams remarked
that he supposed it was Great Britain's desire to protect
her interests in regions where the authority of the United
States was suspended that had induced her to release
the United States "from responsibility for such reclama-
tions by adopting the policy of granting to the insur-
gents the rights of a belligerent."

When Seward announced the purpose of the United

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States to withdraw the exequatur of Consul Bunch, that might well have been regarded as the end of the dispute, unless Great Britain intended to engage in similar negotiations in the future. Russell suggested that this might be necessary. But if it became so, the British representatives were careful to preserve perfect secrecy.

On May 20, 1861, the Secretary of State informed the Russian Minister, Edward de Stoeckl, that the official acts of Edward W. Barnwell, the acting Russian consul at Charleston, would no longer be recognized, as he had joined the military forces in an insurrection against the United States.¹ In the instructions of the next day to Adams, Seward said that this method would be strictly followed in the future.² But the exequatur of Bunch's French colleague was not revoked. The presumption is that after Seward had refused to recognize the joint action of the two powers, he thought it important not to give them a common grievance.

The whole incident was well suited to impress Great Britain and France with the idea that, whatever Seward's other qualities might be, he could not be frightened by foreign combinations. If there had been a suspicion that he would accept any serious interference rather than make good his threat about war, it waned thenceforth. In fact, the belief was spreading in Europe that he was counting on a foreign war as part of a plan of victory and reunion.

¹ Chief Clerk Michael to author, August 16, 1899.

² See *ante*, p. 170.

CHAPTER XXXII

"KING COTTON," THE BLOCKADE, AND THE EUROPEAN INCLINATION TO INTERFERE, 1861

PERHAPS no great revolution was ever begun with such convenient and soothing theories as those that were expounded and believed at the time of the organization of the Confederacy.) Probably there would be no war at all; but if there should be one, northern sympathizers with the South would make it easy for the Confederates to drive back the United States forces, if perchance they should venture upon southern soil. (In any case, hostilities could not last long, for France and Great Britain must have what the Confederacy alone could supply, and therefore they could be forced to aid the South, as a condition precedent to relief from the terrible distress that was sure to follow a blockade.) Of course these theories were employed to prevent the people from perceiving that the hazards of secession were more dangerous than any demonstrations the Republican administration might make against slavery. Because the prophets overlooked the possibility—soon to be a fact—that the Confederacy might at first be without a single ship of war, it did not occur to them that cotton, although "King," might be a suppliant monarch.

There were three distinct means by which the United States undertook to conquer the Confederacy: by military and naval operations, aimed directly at its accumulated resources; by a blockade of southern ports, so as to cut off the exchange of its money and superfluous

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products for articles and materials important to the prosecution of the war and to the comfort of the people; and by keeping foreign countries aloof from the contest, so as to bar them from giving the Confederacy either moral or material support. The military and naval features, as such, do not come within the scope of this narrative; and even the blockade is important to it only in connection with the diplomatic questions to which it gave rise. It was early recognized that to ward off foreign intervention, aid, or substantial sympathy, was the most important task before the Secretary of State.

The President's proclamations of April 19th and 27th were not designed to mark the actual beginning of the blockade; they were merely explicit declarations of intention. This was prudent, for otherwise the United States would have deserved more than the ridicule of all maritime nations. Although there were about forty ships in the United States navy, only three were immediately available for the service of closing one hundred and eighty-five harbor openings.¹ Nearly all the others had been ordered to foreign stations by Buchanan's peace-loving administration, and the remainder were either unserviceable or were already engaged in important enterprises. In such circumstances it was evident that the Secretary of the Navy must be very energetic and the Secretary of State very diplomatic to make the injury to the Confederacy greater than the danger likely to result to the United States from the attempt to shut off commerce between Confederate ports and foreign nations; for a blockade that was only partially effective would give just grounds for complaint, and would be sure to create sympathy with the new government.

¹ 4 Spear's *History of Our Navy*, 32; Soley's *The Blockade and the Cruisers*, 26.

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From the extent of British interests involved, it was to be expected that Lord Lyons would early obtain from Seward an explicit statement as to the leading features of the forthcoming blockade. As the conversation took place before the end of April,¹ it was too soon for Seward to be clear and positive on all questions that might arise; but Lyons reported that as far as the Secretary's "assurances in general terms" went, "nothing could be more satisfactory." Seward's expectation was that the blockade would not be announced publicly at each port, but that no vessel would be liable to seizure that had not been individually warned. This was very discreet. If there should be no United States ship to serve notice, there would be no obstacle to entering the port, and therefore no ground for complaint; on the other hand, the presence of a United States ship would be an actual demonstration of an effective blockade. When it was suggested that it would be impossible to watch the entire coast beyond the Chesapeake, Seward replied that it would all be blockaded, and blockaded effectively. He stated that the foreign vessels in port at the time of the beginning of the blockade would be allowed to leave with their cargoes. And, he added, if any of the rules should seem to bear with undue severity on British ships, he would be ready to consider any representations as to the equities of the matter. His confidence of success seems less surprising when we know that on the day of Lincoln's first proclamation of a blockade twenty steamers were ordered to be purchased and armed.²

G. J. Pendergrast, commander of the United States home squadron, issued a proclamation at Fortress Monroe, Virginia, April 30th, declaring that he had a force

¹ Lyons to Russell, May 2, 1861, quoted Bernard, 228-30.

² Seward, 559.

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sufficient to carry out the blockade of the Virginia and North Carolina coasts, and that all vessels coming from a distance would be warned off. Otherwise difficulty would have arisen with the first seizure on the North Carolina coast, for, as no blockaders were there, it was not actually blockaded.

By the purchase and arming of many merchant-vessels and the recall of governmental ships from foreign ports, the actual blockade rapidly extended southward, although at first it skipped some important ports. The usual practice was to regard the President's April proclamations as general notices; then the announcement of the commander of the ship or of the fleet appearing before such ports as Charleston, Savannah, or Mobile marked the actual beginning of the blockade, although vessels coming from a distance were not seized without due warning unless there was a fair presumption against them. It was two or three months before there was much danger, except at a few points, in attempting to run the blockade. As time went on and knowledge of the blockade might be assumed, the practice of individual warning was given up, and a merchantman bound for any Confederate port was liable to capture at sea, as international law allowed.

Another feature of this blockade was the question of its continuance, under certain conditions. The repudiation of paper blockades compels the continual, but not the continuous, presence of ships, so as to introduce at least a decided element of danger to blockade-runners. In May, 1861, the *Niagara* began the blockade at Charleston, but after a few days she left the port unwatched. Lord Lyons sent a note to Seward expressing the expectation that if the blockade was to be begun again, it would only be after due notification and the regular period had elapsed for the departure of neutral vessels with cargoes. Seward replied that the blockade at

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Their fortunes and misfortunes were strange and thrilling, and but for their assistance the Confederacy could hardly have lived two years.

It was foreseen that some of the industries of England and of France were to be greatly embarrassed by the blockade. Yet there was so general an expectation that the South could not be conquered, and that the attempt would not continue long, that many concluded that foreign aid to the Confederacy would be unnecessary, even to the realization of any selfish aims. Seward's bold warnings against interference made such opinions most expedient. The blockade had scarcely begun when Mercier recommended that France and Great Britain should insist on having it opened for the exportation of cotton.¹ About the same time Lord Palmerston, the Premier of the British Cabinet, said that he would count the day on which he could put an end to the American war one of the happiest of his life; but the shrewd old statesman, who had no scruples against profitable interference, saw that the attempt would then lead to more harm than good.² Europe was, indeed, without the markets and supplies of the South, but those of the North remained open and were never more valuable. If Seward's language was to be taken seriously, it meant that an attempt by one or more foreign nations to disregard the blockade would cause war and entail a loss in trade with the North, perhaps without any substantial gain from commerce with the South. None of the powers could figure out a profitable bargain in such an enterprise. So Great Britain and France continued to postpone action on this question, confident that a decisive battle would soon convince the United States that the Confederacy was invincible. Then European

¹ 2 Walpole's *Russell*, 844; 2 Ashley's *Palmerston*, 210.

² Ashley's *Palmerston*, 208.

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intervention, it was expected, would mean peace—not war, as Seward had proclaimed.

When the news of the Confederate victory at Bull Run, July 31, 1861, reached London, early in August, the commissioners hastened to request an informal interview with Earl Russell; but he cruelly asked them to put their communication in writing. About this time they reported that they had “not received the least notice or attention, official or social, from any member of the government,” and that they differed among themselves as to whether they should press for a definite answer on the question of recognition.¹ In the formal plea made to Russell, a few days later, they informed him that there was an average crop of cotton which would be delivered on the wharves “when there shall be a prospect of the blockade being raised, and not before.” The blockade had often been broken at several points, they said. It was for the neutral powers, whose commerce had been so seriously damaged, to determine how long such a blockade should last.² But Russell continued to show no signs of great concern.

Optimism was so great a factor in Seward's diplomacy that it is difficult to distinguish when his cheerful and confident expressions represented his real opinions and when they were announced merely to encourage others. Shortly before the battle of Bull Run he wrote to Adams that the “possibility of foreign intervention, sooner or later, in this domestic disturbance is never absent from the thoughts of this government.”³ He must have

¹ Commissioners' despatch of August 7th.

² British *Parliamentary Papers*, 1862, *North America No. 1*, 63-68.

³ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 117. This despatch bore the date of July 21, 1861, which was Sunday and the day of the battle. The character of the greater part of it, and Mr. F. W. Seward's account of what the Secretary did that day (2 Seward, 598), indicate that all but the last paragraph was drafted before the 21st.

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feared intervention after that battle; but instead of showing any serious apprehensions, he rejoiced that the defeat would call forth increased resources and compel a careful reorganization of the army.¹ In an unpublished despatch of September 5th, he informed Dayton:

"I am not reposing in the expectation of disinterested sympathy or favor towards our cause, in any foreign country, but I feel it to be necessary that we should obtain time for the complete organization of the powers of the government before suffering the possible foreign complications of our positions to take effect. That assumption is now sufficient to repose upon. I feel assured that foreign nations will from this time forward hesitate more and more about adopting a policy that shall be hostile to this Union. We shall have returning friendship just in the degree that we shall be able to show that we do not need it."

Later in the same month he wrote home saying that his fears of intervention were subsiding, for "the prestige of secession is evidently wearing off in Europe."² He was likely to speak of the best and to prepare for the worst. Undoubtedly he was bearing in mind Adams's advice that the English supply of cotton would last until the middle of September, and that there was no danger of a change of policy in the mean time, but that it was uncertain whether there would subsequently be an attempt to break the blockade.³ He certainly knew that the two greatest European powers were only waiting for a good opportunity to get cotton without taking a war with it.

Although not especially significant, Confederate victories during the summer and early in September strengthened the belief of the Confederates that Great Britain and France would soon be impressed by their military power. They also considered the beginning of

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 123, 286.

² 2 Seward, 621.

³ July 12, 1861. MS.

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the scarcity of cotton in France and England as very favorable to European interference. Before the end of August it was decided to "disunite" the diplomatic trio, and to send James M. Mason and John Slidell as commissioners to Great Britain and to France, respectively. Both ranked high among the Confederate leaders, and while in the United States Senate they had much to do with the foreign policies of Pierce and of Buchanan. Mason was a distinguished member of a distinguished Virginia family, and Southerners believed that he would be more than a match for Adams; while Slidell, like Rost and Soulé, was intimately associated with the creole aristocracy of Louisiana, who felt more at home in Paris than in New York city.

Seward had said that the United States were not disturbed by a British order sending three regiments to Canada and some armed vessels into American waters. Nevertheless, it was wise for him to find a new way to let Europe know that our measures for defence could be greatly increased. So, on October 14, 1861, he addressed a circular letter to the governors of the states either on the seaboard or on the Great Lakes, asking them to bring to the consideration of their respective legislatures the question of perfecting their military defences. It was suggested that if the states should undertake this work, Congress would undoubtedly provide for their reimbursement. The reason he gave for the request was that agents of the Confederacy had tried to invoke European intervention, and, taking advantage of the embarrassments of agriculture, manufactures, and commerce in foreign countries, resulting from the insurrection they had inaugurated at home, they sought to involve our common country in controversies with powers with whom we ought to maintain peaceful relations. The prospect of any such disturbance was then, he said, less serious than it had been at any previous period of

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our trouble. Nevertheless, it was necessary "to take every precaution that is possible to avert the evils of foreign war."¹

Seward's circular had hardly been sent out when the conditions became more favorable to foreign interference. On the 15th of October it was reported that Mason and Slidell had started on their mission.² In fact, the swift little *Theodora* had escaped with them from Charleston, unseen by the blockading fleet, which seemed to be sleeping in the darkness of the early morning of October 12th. Rumor said that they had gone in the *Nashville*, and would be borne direct to Europe; and, of course, their escape would be good evidence of the ineffectiveness of the blockade. In the hope of intercepting them, Commander J. B. Marchand, with the *James Adger*, the fastest warship available, was ordered out from New York, and hastened to the neighborhood of the entrance to the English Channel, expecting to catch the *Nashville*, whether bound for England or for France. Then, on October 21st, came the disaster at Ball's Bluff. Although it was a comparatively small engagement, the mismanagement and destruction of the Union forces greatly helped to increase the prestige of the Confederates.

During this month, too, when Seward was in the midst of the somewhat dangerous correspondence with Great Britain about Consul Bunch's performances and the imprisonment of British subjects, signs of dire ill-omen came from France. A deficient harvest and the scarcity of cotton were beginning to cause such fear of approaching distress that from the chambers of commerce and from manufacturing and business centres there arose petitions and cries for relief—relief by supplying its factories with cotton, the raw material without which,

¹ 8 Moore's *Rebellion Record*, Docs., p. 198.

² 1 *Naval Records*, 118.

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it was claimed, hundreds of thousands of persons would soon be unable to earn the barest necessities of life.

The outlook was so serious that Thouvenel sent to Mercier some instructions to be laid before Seward, which indicated that the French government was on the verge of demanding that the blockade should at least be made less severe. Thouvenel's leading ideas, as reviewed by Seward in an unpublished despatch of October 30, 1861, to Dayton, may be summarized as follows: European nations suffered more from the interruption of their commercial intercourse with the United States than with any other country. The blockade had paralyzed French commerce with the Confederate States. France would, nevertheless, wait patiently if the prolongation of the war were not likely to produce new and grave perils. Cotton had been so extensively used that nothing could be substituted for it. France annually consumed enough for the manufacture of tissues worth nearly one hundred and fifty million dollars. Two hundred thousand bales of this cotton came from the United States. If the supplies should fail, many in Alsace and in Normandy would be in danger of starvation. Complaints had already begun to come in from the commercial cities, and if it should be impossible to make new purchases, the people would address themselves to the government for relief. Thouvenel inquired if the time had not arrived to consider future dangers and avert them while there still remained freedom of action. He had expected that the United States would make some concessions to lessen Europe's embarrassments from the scarcity of cotton. France, at least, was no longer able to postpone an examination of the question. He then asked — which was the significant point — the United States to modify the blockade so as to allow foreign consumers to secure supplies of cotton. He thought that such an arrangement would not have

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an unfavorable effect upon the United States, but would call forth the good-will of other nations.

Thouvenel's expressions were diplomatic and not decidedly unfriendly, but there was a suggestion of a threat in the problem presented, which was likely to excite alarm. France had no right in international law to demand American cotton for her factories, but in the face of popular distress and outcries for relief, every government is prone to resort to arbitrary measures. Seward did not know to what extent the agreement between Great Britain and France to act jointly might be carried. The rumors prevalent a few months before about intervention in Mexico were now confirmed. Such an enterprise would naturally draw Napoleon closer to the Confederacy, and open a wide field for intrigues. Was this warning about the scarcity of a very important raw material merely statesmanlike foresight, or was it an introduction to something else?

Seward, in replying, affected to regard Thouvenel's suggestions as a candid statement of real but unfounded apprehensions. The President was represented as still having the question under consideration; so Seward's despatch, addressed to Dayton, was largely tentative:

"I do not altogether agree with Mr. Thouvenel in regard to the imminence or even the seriousness of the evils which he apprehends in France. The very vigor of modern commerce which makes the shocks which result from its occasional interruption so painful, enables it to seek out relief or mitigation in a speedy change of its movements. My observation, moreover, would lead me to believe that what the manufacturing interest of France is likely to need most and soonest is supplies, not of material, but of provisions, and that the customary purchases of cotton would be unavailing for the relief of her people without a restoration of the market for her cotton, silken, and fancy fabrics and her wines, which notoriously have heretofore been found in the more northern and western of our states, and which the war has temporarily closed." . . .

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Then, in a careful statement of the general nature of the commerce between the United States and France and Great Britain—such a statement as one would expect a tariff-for-revenue-only Democrat to make—he continued :

“There are three leading commercial nations on the earth—namely, the United States, France, and Great Britain. The two last, with less range of production, have the advantage of greater capital and mechanical skill and labor. The former, with a new and unexhausted continent for its home, excels in bread and in materials for manufacture. The United States consume European fabrics and luxuries, and France and Great Britain naturally rely upon us for provisions and vegetable and mineral productions needed in manufacture. Virtually the three nations, though politically divided, constitute only one great society or commonwealth. The wheels of industry in each country move with a certain dependence on the corresponding wheels which are kept in operation in the other countries, and, all moving together, they work out a common prosperity for all of them. Civil war in either country, in just the extent that it is flagrant and obstinate, suspends the wheels which it finds in motion there, and consequently disturbs and retards the accustomed operations of industry in the other two countries.”

... “The Union made the commerce whose obstruction France deploras. Let the Union fall, then not only will that obstruction continue, but with it the highly perfected and thoroughly adapted systems of production, exchange, and consumption, which hitherto have existed in all three of the countries, will disappear forever.”

... “We have adopted, as necessity required, the legitimate means to save the Union, regardless of remonstrances from any quarter, and we have adopted no other.”

In answer to the request for a relaxation of the blockade, Seward said that it was the desire of the government in restoring the Union to use the least harmful means ; but to comply with Thouvenel's suggestions would give all the gain to others, and leave to the United States all the losses and hazards. No mention had been



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made as to how much cotton was desired, or of what would be given in exchange for it. Nor had it been explained how a mitigation of the blockade could be made compatible with Federal sovereignty. Moreover, there had been no statement of the advantages that might be expected to accrue to the United States. It had, indeed, been said that allowing France to have cotton would prevent an accumulation of difficulties. "Our respect for France forbids us from supposing that Mr. Thouvenel is to be understood as implying that she will adopt any injurious or hostile policy, whether in arms or without, if we should refuse to yield a concession, which, although desirable for her own welfare, is, nevertheless, solicited as a favor and not claimed as a right." Lest this might be mistaken for timidity or obtuseness, he warned France that although the United States had not been ambitious for the isolation of this continent, they were not insensible that they had resources sufficient to enable them to rise above the necessity of maintaining existing relations with the old world. Europe had planted slavery here, he said, and we were waiting for its extirpation. "But when European nations shall think of intervening to maintain it here for their own advantage and to the subversion of our own government, they will, I am sure, calculate not only the cost but the probabilities of success in an enterprise which the conscience of the civilized world would forever reprobate and condemn. We do not expect any such proceeding on the part of France."

Turning from "this unpleasant phase of the subject to intimations of more agreeable import," Seward suggested that Thouvenel had neglected to mention the form and extent in which the good-will, of which he had spoken, might be expected to come, and that he had not indicated "the grateful states by which it is to be exer-

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cised." This showed that no complete proposition had yet been made. Then in a few sentences he put upon France the responsibility for the delay, and he made it easy for her to show if her purposes were friendly:

"Heretofore France has advised us that she was acting upon agreement with Great Britain in all that concerns our affairs. We are not informed whether hereafter that power is to act towards us in an improved spirit, while the confidence imposed upon me by Mr. Thouvenel does not even allow me to seek any explanation on the subject from Great Britain herself.

"It is left equally obscure with whom the combination can be formed by us, or what is the nature of the combination itself which it is suggested the President can make with a view to disperse the difficulties with which our position is, in the judgment of Mr. Thouvenel, surrounded.

"I am sure that Mr. Thouvenel will admit that these reflections are natural and just. They suggest these inquiries: First, if we should relax our blockade, as Mr. Thouvenel proposes, will France thereafter maintain an attitude of cold indifference to our exertions for the preservation of the American Union, with its inestimable blessings, or will she regard the struggle as one virtuous in its nature, noble in its object, and needful to the best interests of mankind? If France should so regard it, to what extent would she exert her own great influence to cause it to be so regarded by other nations? If we make the concession required of us, are we still to be held to the strict law of maintaining a blockade with adequate force at every port on our sea-coast of three thousand miles, or shall we be challenged when we proceed to close the ports usurped by our own disloyal citizens, without provoking the intervention of the parties whom we shall have sacrificed so much to favor thus in a season of distress? Shall pirates preying upon our commerce be sheltered, supplied, and armed in the ports of the nations to whom we have opened, at our own cost, a trade from which by the law of nations they had been rightfully excluded?"

Dayton was instructed to ask confidentially for information on these points. Seward did not believe that the struggle would be as protracted as Thouvenel sup-

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posed, and he felt confident that the United States would "be in free possession of some or all of those ports" "long before France or any other nation shall be brought to such distress as he apprehends." Then "our own commerce and that of the world" would be restored to their former flourishing condition.

This was one of Seward's great despatches; perhaps it was the greatest, if we consider his perfect balance and the diplomatic way in which he seemed to ignore what was menacing, while he adroitly let Thouvenel see what the result would be if the implied threats should be carried out. Like the man in the proverb who went out for wool and came back shorn, Thouvenel, instead of receiving such a response as he had sought, found himself confronted with a request for a careful exposition of the attitude France would assume under certain conditions; and this request had been made with such perfect skill that the great Frenchman had to comply with it or change the current of his inquiries. Either course would be a decided gain to the United States. Although Seward wrote at a time when he was in the midst of "intense anxiety and severe labor," and thought it doubtful whether the government could escape the yet deeper and darker abyss of foreign war,¹ the despatch showed no signs of impatience or irritability.

¹ A letter to Mrs. Seward, written on the next day, shows that Seward's temperament had not changed, but he had learned to exercise more self-control in his official communications:

"The pressure of interests and ambitions in Europe, which disunionists have procured to operate on the Cabinets of London and Paris, have made it doubtful whether we can escape the yet deeper and darker abyss of foreign war. The responsibility resting upon me is overwhelming. My associates, of course, can differ with me about what I ought to do and say, but not advise me what to do and say. I have worried through, and finished my despatches. They must go for good or evil. I have done my best. I thought that my health would fail, but now I am well and cheerful, and hopeful as ever."—
2 Seward, 627.

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"King Cotton" had not yet justified the expectations formed of him, but there was still an apparently substantial basis for confidence in his power. In a message of November 18, 1861, Jefferson Davis warned Europe, over the shoulders of the Confederate Congress, that it was "plain that a long continuance of this blockade might, by a diversion of labor and investment of capital in other employments, so diminish the supply as to bring ruin upon all those interests of foreign countries which are dependent on that staple"; and it remained to be seen, he said, how far the war might "work a revolution in the industrial system of the world."

Of course Seward could not know either the amount of distress that would be caused on account of the lack of cotton, or the political considerations that might induce France or Great Britain, or both of them, to interfere. As a matter of fact, Palmerston and Russell thought it still too soon to act, although France would have been ready to join in serving notice on the belligerents that they must make up their quarrels or count the two great powers as their enemies. If the policy was to be changed Russell believed that it should be done on a grand scale.¹ All interested parties looked forward with hope or fear to the meeting of the British and the French Parliaments early in 1862, when, it was thought, some definite policy would be adopted. The strength of Seward's diplomacy so far had been in its fearlessness, not in any ability to win European sympathy for the North. But he now realized the importance of trying to influence the two great governments by bringing the press and the clergy, and then the people, to a correct understanding of the causes and purposes of the Civil War. This intention seems to have taken a definite shape in his mind in October, 1861.

¹ 2 Walpole's *Russell*, 344; 2 Ashley's *Palmerston*, 28.

EUROPEAN INCLINATION TO INTERFERE

The original plan was to send Edward Everett, J. P. Kennedy, Archbishop Hughes, and Bishop McIlvaine to Europe. Subsequently Robert C. Winthrop was also invited.¹ But of the five only the two ecclesiastics found it practicable to accept; and the Archbishop even made his acceptance conditional on having Thurlow Weed for a colleague. Seward was afraid of the criticism that might be occasioned by Weed's appointment, for most of the strong antislavery men had not forgiven Weed for favoring compromise the previous winter. Finally, Seward's fears were so far overcome as to allow Weed to go abroad "as a volunteer," while the expenses of the others were to be paid by the government.² It was believed that Weed could correct many of the erroneous impressions in the minds of French and English journalists and public men, and also undo some of the work of the Confederate press-agents. Bishop McIlvaine, of the Protestant Episcopal Church, was expected to develop among English clergymen a sentiment against the Confederacy, the corner-stone of which was slavery. Archbishop Hughes bore Seward's important reply to Thouvenel, and it was hoped that his distinguished rank would help him to win for the North the sympathy of Napoleon, of the Pope, and of other Catholics high in church and state. General Scott, who had retired from the army and was going abroad for his health, had in vain coveted a semi-diplomatic position.³ All set out early in November. Scott and Weed sailed together; and it was odd that they should narrowly escape capture by the *Nashville*,⁴ which was supposed to have Mason and Slidell aboard. But, in fact, these Confederates were then sailing northward in a United States warship. And an incident had occurred that

¹ Winthrop to Seward, November 12th. Seward MSS.

² ¹ *Weed*, 634-88; ³ Seward, 17-19.

³ ⁸ Seward, 20.

⁴ ⁸ Seward, 20.

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was to change the point of immediate danger from Paris to London and to make the all-important question not one about cotton and European interference in America, but of American interference with neutral rights.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE TRENT AFFAIR

A few days after Mason and Slidell escaped from Charleston, the *Theodora* landed them at Cardenas, Cuba, whence they leisurely proceeded to Havana, to take the *Trent*, a British packet running between Vera Cruz and St. Thomas. Captain Wilkes, in the *San Jacinto*, was on the southern coast of Cuba, when he heard of the *Theodora* and her important passengers. He hastened to Havana, hoping to capture the little blockade-runner; but being too late, he concluded to try to catch the diplomatists elsewhere. He was lying in wait in the Bahama Channel, November 8th, when the *Trent* came along. A shot and then a shell fired across her bow halted her. Wilkes sent an officer and an armed guard aboard. Her captain refused to show the ship's papers or the passenger-list; but Mason and Slidell and their two secretaries were recognized and forcibly removed to the *San Jacinto*, notwithstanding the angry protests of the officers of the British ship. The *Trent* was then permitted to continue on her course. From St. Thomas many of the passengers and at least one of the officers went direct to London and spread the news of the exciting incident. The *San Jacinto* proudly bore off her prize to the United States, and in a few days the would-be envoys extraordinary at the Courts of the Tuileries and of St. James were prisoners in Fort Warren, near Boston. But their surprise was as nothing compared with the

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state of public feeling in the United States and in Great Britain.

A few days before the news of the *Trent* affair reached London, Captain Marchand appeared in English waters with the *James Adger*, and coaled and took on supplies at Southampton. As it was known by this time that Mason and Slidell were going to Europe *via* the West Indies, it was assumed that Marchand's instructions were to seize the Confederate emissaries in a British merchantman. Before Adams had had an opportunity to explain to Palmerston that Marchand was looking for the *Nashville*—to the capture of which Great Britain could have taken no exception—a British warship was sent out to prevent Marchand from interfering with neutral rights; and the newspapers and the government were expecting something sensational near home.¹ The erroneous inference about Marchand's instructions was not corrected outside of a small circle; therefore, when Wilkes's exploit was reported it was widely assumed that he had acted on orders. England was soon ablaze with indignation at the alleged insult to British sovereignty. Interest, prejudice, and politics worked together. Many persons endeavored to use the affair so as to help forward the plan of breaking the blockade and recognizing the Confederacy. "The whole feeling of the people," one of Seward's English friends wrote, "has undergone a change. Sympathy was but coldly expressed for the South. Now it is warm and universal."² The newspapers, led by the London *Times*, used the most violent language toward the United States, and were extremely bitter against Seward. It was charged and widely believed that an affront had been intended and a war sought. Seward's earlier declarations about Canada and his letter to the governors of the states bordering

¹ 115 *War Records*, 1078, 1104.

² Charles Mackay, 115 *War Records*, 1107.

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on the Great Lakes or the Atlantic were understood to mean that he desired a war for the purpose of annexing Canada. It was especially unfortunate that such liberal-minded and devoted allies of the North as Bright, Cobden, the Duke of Argyll, the Duchess of Sutherland, and others regarded Seward as unfriendly to Great Britain.'

The recounting of two incidents that had occurred within a year greatly prejudiced the minds of the British Cabinet against him. In April, 1861, it was rumored that the Confederates had purchased the *Peerless*, a ship lying at Toronto, to be used as a commerce-destroyer, and that she was to go down the St. Lawrence under the British flag and be delivered to them at sea. Seward demanded that Lord Lyons should take immediate action to prevent this, but the British Minister explained that his relation to Canada made compliance impossible. Seward then declared that he would have the ship seized by our naval forces, and without informing the British government he despatched George Ashmun to Toronto on an official mission. Lords Russell and Lyons inferred from this action that Seward thought he could overawe Great Britain. They entered their solemn protests. Ashmun was recalled as uncereemoniously as he was sent; the *Peerless* did not go to the Confederates; and perhaps it was Seward's summary course that prevented it. But his first conspicuous act in foreign affairs had made an unfavorable impression.² The other incident was thoroughly trifling except in its effect. During the festivities when the Prince of Wales was in Albany, late in 1860, Seward chaffingly remarked to the Duke of Newcastle that he was soon to be in a position where it would be his duty to insult Great Britain, and he should proceed to do so. The Duke took the remark seriously, and as Colonial Secretary re-

¹ 4 Pierce, 80, 81; 3 Rhodes, 532, 533; 3 Seward, 80, 81.

² *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 105, 106, 112; 2 Walpole's *Russell*, 342, 343.

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ported it to his colleagues. The newspapers soon sent the story forth on every breeze.

Under these influences the government and the people were soon ready for action. It was a time for Lord Palmerston, the Prime Minister, to indulge his passion for driving the wheel close to the precipice so as to show how dexterously he could avoid going over it, as Cobden said. Lord Russell quickly drafted an emphatic ultimatum, and sent it to the Queen for approval. But the benevolent Victoria was in no mood for war, for the Prince Consort was in his last illness. They scrutinized the draft and returned it with recommendations that were wise, charitable, and designed to show that the sole purpose of the demand upon the United States was to protect the dignity and sovereignty of Great Britain.

Russell adopted the suggestions, and, on November 30th, instructed Lord Lyons to demand that the United States should release the four men and make a suitable apology. In another note of the same date he directed that if this should not be done after a delay of seven days, the British Minister should hasten to London with the entire legation and its archives. Russell seems to have concluded, by the next day, that this was too threatening a mode of procedure with a man of Seward's supposed fighting propensities. So Lyons was privately requested not to carry the despatch with him when he first brought the matter to Seward's attention; the President and the Secretary should be left to choose their own course, and anything like menace should be avoided. After the administration had had time to consider the facts, then the formal despatch should be read to Seward. If the Confederates should be liberated the British Cabinet would be "rather easy about the apology." Nevertheless, prepa-

¹ 2 Walpole's *Russell*, 346.

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rations for war were pushed forward in all directions. As one of Palmerston's biographers has said: "In three weeks from ten thousand to eleven thousand troops were on their way across the Atlantic, and our naval force at that station was nearly doubled. The English public was certainly in a great rage."¹

Perhaps the most significant signs of the time were the expressions of rapture on the part of Confederates in Richmond, London, and Paris alike. But this was not known in the North until a week or two later. They were confident that the *Trent* affair would involve the United States in a foreign war, turn Great Britain into an ally of the South, and soon bring victory and independence to the Confederacy. In ecstasy A. Dudley Mann congratulated R. M. T. Hunter, Toombs's successor as Confederate Secretary of State, that recognition by Great Britain was not much longer to be delayed, and added: "An hour after the Cabinet decided upon its line of action with respect to the outrage committed by the *San Jacinto*, I was furnished with full particulars. What a noble statesman is Lord Palmerston!"²

In the North there was a great outburst of joy over the seizure. "We do not believe the American heart ever thrilled with more genuine delight," said an editorial article in the *New York Times* of November 17th. "As for Commodore Wilkes and his command, let the handsome thing be done. Consecrate another *Fourth* of July to him. Load him down with services of plate and swords of the cunningest and costliest art." Several features that were largely accidental contributed to raise the rejoicing to the highest pitch. Excepting Davis and Floyd, probably Mason and Slidell were at this time the most generally hated of all the Confeder-

¹ 2 Ritchie's *Palmerston*, 349.

² 115 *War Records*, 1236.

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ates. Mason was the author of the fugitive-slave law, and was supposed to have done most to get Virginia to join the Confederacy; whereas Slidell, a Northerner by birth and education, had become one of the most effective champions of slavery and secession. If they succeeded in reaching Europe they would be strong evidence against the efficiency of the blockade. The supposition that they had gone in a Confederate ship left in the minds of the people of the North only a question of the possibility of their capture, without any thought of interfering with the rights of any neutral nation. There had been so few victories and so many disappointments that the smallest success would have been welcomed and exaggerated. Wilkes's exploit was so picturesque, and it came at a moment when a whole section was anxious, that it acted like touching a match to powder. Wilkes immediately became a hero—a second and victorious Anderson. Grave, learned, and experienced men in Boston applauded his act and fêted him as soon as he came ashore. The Secretary of the Navy rushed with the crowd and sent official and gushing congratulations "for the great public service you have rendered in the capture of the rebel emissaries." When Congress met, on December 2d, the House could not wait to complete the routine of its organization before passing a resolution thanking Wilkes "for his brave, adroit, and patriotic conduct in the arrest and detention of the traitors, James M. Mason and John Slidell." The rejoicing was at first an expression of national pride rather than of defiance of Great Britain, although the popular antipathy to her had become greatly embittered during the past few months. Later, when threatening signs appeared on the horizon, many men became desperate and foolhardy at the prospect of having our blockade broken and our

¹ *Globe*, 1861-62, 5.

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cities bombarded. Reckless patriotism seemed to be all-important. The very elements of international law were quite forgotten or strangely misrepresented.

Fortunately there were some important exceptions. Charles Sumner, who was chairman of the Senate committee on foreign affairs, early and repeatedly advised the President that the seizure could not be successfully defended. On November 28th Thomas Ewing wrote to Lincoln that "we ought not to vouch as authority previous aggressive acts of England at a time when she was a swaggering bully on the ocean." If we did, Great Britain, at war ten years to our one, could "stretch the law against us to the same point." He thought the best way to treat the incident would be to let her lay down the law, and for the United States to agree to anything favorable to neutral vessels, their cargoes and passengers.¹ Lewis Cass telegraphed similar opinions to Seward, December 18th; and in a letter the following day he said that a war with Great Britain would go far toward preventing the restoration of the rebel states; he ridiculed the "laudations bestowed upon Captain Wilkes for his courage in taking three or four unarmed men out of an unarmed vessel," and added: "As for any injury which these rebel agents could do us in Europe, it is all nonsense." On December 16th Robert J. Walker also very forcibly presented the political and national interests involved. Those who would unnecessarily involve the United States in a war with Great Britain were allies of the southern rebellion, he said; and the statesmen who from want of courage and firmness subjected the country to such a war would "meet the execrations of the American people and of the friends of liberty throughout the world, and will join the wretched caravan of infamy of which Buchanan is

¹ 115 *War Records*, 1108.

¹ 115 *War Records*, 1182.

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at present the only leader." He believed that the popular clamor would soon pass away.¹ George Ticknor Curtis maintained, in a Boston newspaper, that, whether the capture was justifiable or not, the prisoners could not be held because Wilkes had voluntarily let the ship go free, and thereby had made it impossible to obtain the required judgment of a judicial tribunal. "Our countrymen have not so little intelligence or so much false pride as not to be able or willing to see that a principle important to the peace of the world is involved in this case." This argument was probably in Seward's hands by December 22d.²

From several of the most sober-minded Americans abroad came some very significant comments. Adams, whose wisdom increased with the emergency, strongly advised, on December 3d, against approving Wilkes's act, "unless we are ready also to assume their [Great Britain's] old arrogant claim of the dominion of the seas. Our neutral rights are as valuable to us as ever they were, whilst time has reflected nothing but credit on our steady defence of them against superior power."³ Three days later he wrote again to Seward: "Ministers and people now fully believe it is the *intention* of the government to drive them into hostilities. . . . My present expectation is that by the middle of January, at furthest, diplomatic relations will have been sundered between the two countries, without any act of mine."⁴ A passage in an unpublished despatch that Dayton sent from Paris, December 3d, was still more discomfiting:

"It is very evident, however, that upon *this question* we will have scarcely a friend among the press or public men in Europe. The impression here, as in England, is getting to be general that *we are a power reckless of the obligations of international law*. . . . I have been asked by intelligent

¹ 115 *War Records*, 1127-29.

² 115 *War Records*, 1116.

³ 115 *War Records*, 1137-39.

⁴ 115 *War Records*, 1119, 1120.

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gentlemen here why it was that *you* seemed so determined 'to pick a quarrel' with England. It was vain to answer that no such determination did or could exist; that under present circumstances it would be an act of folly, little short of madness; they would not believe me. . . . Still I cannot but feel that, right or wrong, this seizure of the Confederate commissioners on board a British ship has come at a most inopportune moment."

Thouvenel informed Dayton about this time that, in case of war, the moral force of French opinion would be against the United States, and that all the maritime powers with whom he had conferred agreed that Wilkes had violated international law.¹ On December 5th John Bigelow wrote to Seward that the *Trent* affair was "universally regarded here [in Paris] by the press, the people, and the government, as a rude assault upon the dignity of a neutral nation."² He also prepared a letter expressing the belief that the United States would surrender the Confederates if Great Britain should adopt the liberal policy long favored by our government. Weed had it signed by General Scott, then in Paris.³ This so-called Scott letter was published there as early as December 4th.⁴ It was quoted throughout Europe, and appeared in the *New York Times* of December 19th. Weed's reports and opinions sent to Seward were very positive in opposition to approving Wilkes's act, and must have had much weight.⁵

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 307.

² Seward MSS.

³ 1 *Weed*, 655, 656.

⁴ 3 Seward, 27, 28.

⁵ Here are a few sentences:—December 2d: "I saw a letter from a high source from London, in which it is again said that you want to provoke a war with England for the purpose of getting Canada. . . . You are in a 'tight place,' and I pray that you may be imbued with the wisdom the emergency requires. *This is true.*" December 4th: "Systematic agencies and efforts must have been employed to poison both the English government and people against you. It crops out in the London journals through all their articles. . . . All around they [your friends] found people fortified with evidences of your hostility to England." December 6th: "What I mentioned yesterday about

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But what were Seward's acts and thoughts during the five weeks between the time of learning of the incident and of being informed of Great Britain's attitude? Several years afterward Gideon Welles stated that at first "no man was more elated and jubilant over the capture of the emissaries than Mr. Seward."¹ This is not improbable; were it otherwise Seward would have been a rare exception. Postmaster-General Blair, alone of all the members of the Cabinet, is known to have immediately judged the affair correctly.² Seward's habits and associations were most likely to lead him to regard the probable political results as being of prime consideration. Whatever may have been his first impulses or private opinion, he was certainly non-committal so far as the public knew. Three facts of importance are now known: that he believed France, and perhaps Great Britain, to be on the verge of intervention of some sort; that he had so earnestly deprecated European interference, and the war sure to follow, as to send abroad special commissioners, and to employ his best faculties to try to remove all excuses for less amicable relations; and that the *Trent* incident was wholly unexpected and antagonistic so far as Seward and the diplomatic plans of the administration were concerned. His habitual tenacity of purpose was likely to hold him to his policy of avoiding a war. But there was the popular applause of Wilkes; and it always made Seward very unhappy to find that the people were against him, unless he felt confi-

the Duke of Newcastle is too true. Whatever you said to him has been used, first, to put the Ministry against you, and has now been given to the newspapers. . . (God grant that you also foresaw the wisdom of concession to English tenacity about the honor of its flag.) Everything here is upon a war footing. Such prompt and gigantic preparations were never known. . . I was told yesterday, repeatedly, that I ought to write the President demanding your dismissal." —Seward, 27-29.

¹ *Lincoln and Seward*, 185.

² Welles, 186, 187.

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dent of quickly winning them back to his side. In such circumstances the shrewd politician tries to wear a complacent look, while he waits until compelled to decide.

In a confidential despatch of November 27th Seward informed Adams that Wilkes had acted without instructions, and that, as Lord Lyons had not referred to the incident, "I thought it equally wise to reserve ourselves until we hear what the British government may have to say on the subject." Three days later he wrote that "we think it more prudent that the ground taken by the British government should be first made known to us here, and that the discussion, if there must be one, shall be had here." The slightest hint as to what was to be the policy of the government would have been of the greatest utility to Adams and Weed; but Weed complained, as late as December 31st, "I have not heard a syllable from you." Evidently Seward did not come to a definite conclusion until a few days after he knew the attitude of Great Britain.

On December 19th Lord Lyons acquainted Seward with the general nature of Russell's leading despatch. With perfect diplomacy the British Minister expressed his willingness to accept Seward's suggestions as to the easiest way to accomplish the arrangement Great Britain demanded. Lyons reported that Seward received the communication "seriously and with dignity, but without any manifestation of dissatisfaction"; he asked for two days' time before giving an opinion, and expressed himself as "very sensible of the friendly and conciliatory manner" in which the case had been presented.¹ When Lord Lyons called again, Saturday, December 21st, Seward frankly said that other pressing duties had prevented him from fully mastering this question, and he requested that the formal presentation of the case

¹ 115 *War Records*, 1102, 1109.

² 8 Seward, 32.

³ 115 *War Records*, 1185.

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might be postponed until Monday. On Monday morning, the 23d, the British Minister returned, read the despatch, and left a copy, which Seward promised to lay before the President immediately.¹

By this time Seward had a clear idea of the state of public opinion in Europe. Adams's warning and very impressive despatch of December 3d reached the department December 21st.² By the same date he had undoubtedly read Weed's letter of the 2d, the so-called Scott letter, and the London and Paris papers of three or four days after the excitement burst forth. Dayton's despatch of the 3d and Adams's of the 6th arrived on the 24th and 25th, respectively.³ Bigelow's letter was in Seward's hands on the 25th.⁴ Probably all of Weed's letters prior to December 7th had been received by the 24th or the 25th. And the opinions of Ewing, Cass, Walker, George Ticknor Curtis, and many others were before him several days earlier.

The President and the Secretary of State did not agree when they reviewed the case. Lincoln said: "Governor Seward, you will go on, of course, preparing your answer, which, as I understand it, will state the reasons why they ought to be given up. Now, I have a mind to try my hand at stating the reasons why they ought *not* to be given up. We will compare the points on each side."⁵

The principal feature of the President's draft was a proposal to arbitrate the *Trent* incident and to bring into view the precedents in analogous cases and the position Great Britain had assumed toward the existing rebellion. Doubtless because it was found to be unsuited

¹ 115 *War Records*, 1142.

² Department memorandum on despatch.

³ Department memorandum.

⁴ Seward's autograph memorandum on the letter.

⁵ 3 Seward, 25.

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to the actual conditions, it was not even shown to the Cabinet.¹ 4

Up to ten o'clock in the morning of Wednesday, the 25th, when Seward's draft was ready to be laid before the Cabinet, no one except Blair and Seward seems to have favored a full compliance with the British demand. "It was considered on my presentation of it on the 25th and 26th of December," Seward wrote to Weed. "The government, when it took the subject up, had no idea of the grounds upon which it would explain its action, nor did it believe that it would concede the case. Yet it was heartily unanimous in the actual result after two days' examination, and in favor of the release." Doubtless all the influences that Seward had felt were brought to bear upon his colleagues. Sumner attended the Cabinet conference on Christmas-day and read letters from Bright and from Cobden showing how much they deprecated war and how difficult it was to avoid it without the surrender of the Confederates.² A despatch from Thouvenel to Mercier was also considered.³ It fully confirmed the reports about France's attitude. Undoubtedly she was glad to find Great Britain reversing her practice; but what must have surprised and impressed the administration was the apparently sincere and almost affectionate appeal to our government not to commit the fatal error of trying to defend what had been done.⁴ Bates came early to Seward's support. He told his colleagues that to go to war with England would be "to abandon all hope of suppressing the rebellion"; that it would sweep our ships from southern waters, ruin our trade, and bankrupt our treasury. Yet "there was great reluctance on the part of some of the members of the Cabinet—and even the President himself— 4

¹ 5 Nicolay and Hay, 84.

² 2 Weed, 409; 3 Seward, 42, 43.

³ 8 Rhodes, 529 ff.; 4 Pierce, 59. ⁴ 5 Nicolay and Hay, 36.

⁵ Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 8, 37th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 13-15.

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to acknowledge these obvious truths." The risk of a conflict with Great Britain was the decisive influence for concession. That there should have been two opinions about it is now almost incomprehensible. We may assume with confidence that this peril, emphasized by the advice of Adams, Weed, Bigelow, and Dayton, was the chief factor in Seward's conclusions.

Bates also recorded, with perfect candor and truth, why so many still hesitated: "The main fear, I believe, was the displeasure of our own people—lest they should accuse us of timidly truckling to the power of England." The long session on Christmas-day did not suffice; so the consideration of the question was continued on the next day. At last, on the 26th, "all yielded to, and concurred in, Mr. Seward's letter to Lord Lyons, after some verbal and formal amendments." It had already been rumored that Mason and Slidell were to be released, probably at the same hour in which the Cabinet was giving its approval to Seward's draft. John P. Hale told the Senate that he had talked with many gentlemen about the question, but "not a man can be found who is in favor of this surrender; for it would humiliate us in the eyes of the world, irritate our own people, and subject us to their indignant scorn." It seems likely that this statement represented the opinion of four-fifths,

¹ Quoted 5 Nicolay and Hay, 36. Sumner saw the danger as clearly as Bates. "War with England involves—(1) Instant acknowledgment of rebel states by England, followed by France; (2) Breaking of the present blockade, with capture of our fleet—Dupont and all; (3) The blockade of our coast from Chesapeake to Eastport; (4) The sponging of our ships from the ocean; (5) The establishment of the independence of rebel states; (6) Opening of these states by free-trade to English manufacturers, which would be introduced by contraband into our states, making the whole North American continent a manufacturing dependency of England. All this I have put to the President."—Sumner to Lieber, December 24th.—4 Pierce, 58.

² Bates's diary. Quoted 5 Nicolay and Hay, 36.

³ *Globe*, 1861-62, 177.

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perhaps nineteen-twentieths, of the people of the United States.

If Seward had known at first that Wilkes's act was contrary to international law, he would have foreseen that Great Britain would insist on the surrender of the prisoners, and that it would be easier to defend effectively a voluntary release than one that resulted from a demand.¹ Moreover, at the beginning, public opinion could have been quietly influenced if not controlled.² But after five weeks, when passions had become aroused and thousands of prominent men were committed in approval of the action of Wilkes, it was much more difficult. Seward's predicament at last was very peculiar; the prisoners had to be released, but it was important to justify this release in such a way as not to arouse the resentment of the great popular majority, or either to offend the House of Representatives or humiliate the Secretary of the Navy. Otherwise the administration would find itself greatly weakened, and perhaps unable to command sufficient support to save the Union. So it is not surprising that this reply to Russell is the most studied and elaborately adroit paper that ever came from Seward's pen.³ After reviewing the leading facts connected with the incident, he proceeds to discuss it in its legal aspects:

"The question before us is, whether this proceeding was authorized by and conducted according to the law of nations. It involves the following inquiries:

¹ Lord Lyons, in explaining his own non-committal attitude pending instructions, said: "The American people would more easily tolerate a spontaneous offer of reparation made by its government from a sense of justice than a compliance with a demand for satisfaction from a foreign minister."—115 *War Records*, 1095.

² Lyons considered the press moderate at first.—*Ibid.*, 1100.

³ The full text is printed in Senate Ex. Doc. No. 8, 37th Cong., 2d Sess.; 115 *War Records*, 1145; Bernard, 201.

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"1st. Were the persons named and their supposed despatches contraband of war?"

"2d. Might Captain Wilkes lawfully stop and search the *Trent* for these contraband persons and despatches?"

"3d. Did he exercise that right in a lawful and proper manner?"

"4th. Having found the contraband persons on board, and in presumed possession of the contraband despatches, had he a right to capture the persons?"

"5th. Did he exercise that right of capture in the manner allowed and recognized by the law of nations?"

"If all these inquiries shall be resolved in the affirmative, the British government will have no claim for reparation.

"I address myself to the first inquiry—namely, were the four persons mentioned, and their supposed despatches, contraband?"

"Maritime law so generally deals, as its professors say, *in rem*, that is with property, and so seldom with persons, that it seems a straining of the term contraband to apply it to them. But persons, as well as property, may become contraband, since the word means broadly 'contrary to proclamation, prohibited, illegal, unlawful.'

"All writers and judges pronounce naval or military persons in the service of the enemy contraband. Vattel says war allows us to cut off from an enemy all his resources, and to hinder him from sending ministers to solicit assistance. And Sir William Scott says you may stop the ambassador of your enemy on his passage. Despatches are not less clearly contraband, and the bearers or couriers who undertake to carry them fall under the same condemnation.

"A subtlety might be raised whether pretended ministers of a usurping power, not recognized as legal by either the belligerent or the neutral, could be held to be contraband. But it would disappear on being subjected to what is the true test in all cases—namely, the spirit of the law. Sir William Scott, speaking of civil magistrates who are arrested and detained as contraband, says:

"'It appears to me on principle to be but reasonable that when it is of sufficient importance to the enemy that such persons shall be sent out on the public service at the public expense, it should afford equal ground of forfeiture against the vessel that may be let out for a purpose so intimately connected with the hostile operations.'

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"I trust that I have shown that the four persons who were taken from the *Trent* by Captain Wilkes, and their despatches, were contraband of war.

"The second inquiry is whether Captain Wilkes had a right by the law of nations to detain and search the *Trent*.

"The *Trent*, though she carried mails, was a contract or merchant vessel—a common carrier for hire. Maritime law knows only three classes of vessels—vessels of war, revenue vessels, and merchant vessels. The *Trent* falls within the latter class. Whatever disputes have existed concerning a right of visitation or search in time of peace, none, it is supposed, has existed in modern times about the right of a belligerent in time of war to capture contraband in neutral and even friendly merchant vessels, and of the right of visitation and search, in order to determine whether they are neutral, and are documented as such according to the law of nations.

"I assume in the present case what, as I read British authorities, is regarded by Great Britain herself as true maritime law: That the circumstance that the *Trent* was proceeding from a neutral port to another neutral port does not modify the right of the belligerent captor.

"The third question is whether Captain Wilkes exercised the right of search in a lawful and proper manner.

"If any doubt hung over this point, as the case was presented in the statement of it adopted by the British government, I think it must have already passed away before the modifications of that statement which I have already submitted.

"I proceed to the fourth inquiry—namely: Having found the suspected contraband of war on board the *Trent*, had Captain Wilkes a right to capture the same?

"Such a capture is the chief, if not the only recognized, object of the permitted visitation and search. The principle of the law is that the belligerent exposed to danger may prevent the contraband persons or things from applying themselves or being applied to the hostile uses or purposes designed. The law is so very liberal in this respect that when contraband is found on board a neutral vessel, not only is the contraband forfeited, but the vessel which is the vehicle of its passage or transportation, being tainted, also becomes contraband, and is subjected to capture and confiscation.

"Only the fifth question remains—namely: Did Captain

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Wilkes exercise the right of capturing the contraband in conformity with the law of nations?

"It is just here that the difficulties in the case begin. What is the manner which the law of nations prescribes for disposing of the contraband when you have found and seized it on board of the neutral vessel? The answer would be easily found if the question were what you shall do with the contraband vessel. You must take or send her into a convenient port, and subject her to a judicial prosecution there in admiralty, which will try and decide the questions of belligerency, neutrality, contraband, and capture. So, again, you would promptly find the same answer if the question were, what is the manner of proceeding prescribed by the law of nations in regard to the contraband, if it be property or things of material or pecuniary value?

"But the question here concerns the mode of procedure in regard, not to the vessel that was carrying the contraband, nor yet to contraband things which worked the forfeiture of the vessel, but to contraband persons."

... "But only courts of admiralty have jurisdiction in maritime cases, and these courts have formulas to try only claims to contraband chattels, but none to try claims concerning contraband persons. The courts can entertain no proceedings and render no judgment in favor of or against the alleged contraband men.

"It was replied all this was true; but you can reach in those courts a decision which will have the moral weight of a judicial one by a circuitous proceeding. Convey the suspected men, together with the suspected vessel, into port, and try there the question whether the vessel is contraband. You can prove it to be so by proving the suspected men to be contraband, and the court must then determine the vessel to be contraband. If the men are not contraband the vessel will escape condemnation. Still, there is no judgment for or against the captured persons. But it was assumed that there would result from the determination of the court concerning the vessel a legal certainty concerning the character of the men."

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"In the present case, Captain Wilkes, after capturing the contraband persons and making prize of the *Trent* in what seems to be a perfectly lawful manner, instead of sending her into port, released her from the capture, and

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permitted her to proceed with her whole cargo upon her voyage. He thus effectually prevented the judicial examination which might otherwise have occurred."

"I have not been unaware that, in examining this question, I have fallen into an argument for what seems to be the British side of it against my own country. But I am relieved from all embarrassment on that subject. I had hardly fallen into that line of argument when I discovered that I was really defending and maintaining, not an exclusively British interest, but an old, honored, and cherished American cause, not upon British authorities, but upon principles that constitute a large portion of the distinctive policy by which the United States have developed the resources of a continent, and thus becoming a considerable maritime power, have won the respect and confidence of many nations. These principles were laid down for us in 1804, by James Madison, when Secretary of State in the administration of Thomas Jefferson, in instructions given to James Monroe, our minister to England. Although the case before him concerned a description of persons different from those who are incidentally the subjects of the present discussion, the ground he assumed then was the same I now occupy, and the arguments by which he sustained himself upon it have been an inspiration to me in preparing this reply."

"If I decide this case in favor of my own government, I must disavow its most cherished principles, and reverse and forever abandon its essential policy. The country cannot afford the sacrifice. If I maintain those principles, and adhere to that policy, I must surrender the case itself. It will be seen, therefore, that this government could not deny the justice of the claim presented to us in this respect upon its merits. (We are asked to do to the British nation just what we have always insisted all nations ought to do to us.)

"The claim of the British government is not made in a discourteous manner. This government, since its first organization, has never used more guarded language in a similar case.

"In coming to my conclusion I have not forgotten that if the safety of this Union required the detention of

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the captured persons it would be the right and duty of this government to detain them. But the effectual check and waning proportions of the existing insurrection, as well as the comparative unimportance of the captured persons themselves, when dispassionately weighed, happily forbid me from resorting to that defence."

"Nor have I been tempted at all by suggestions that cases might be found in history where Great Britain refused to yield to other nations, and even to ourselves, claims like that which is now before us. . . . It would tell little for our own claims to the character of a just and magnanimous people if we should so far consent to be guided by the law of retaliation as to lift up buried injuries from their graves to oppose against what national consistency and the national conscience compel us to regard as a claim intrinsically right.

"Putting behind me all suggestions of this kind, I prefer to express my satisfaction that, by the adjustment of the present case upon principles confessedly American, and yet, as I trust, mutually satisfactory to both of the nations concerned, a question is finally and rightly settled between them, which, heretofore exhausting not only all forms of peaceful discussion, but also the arbitrament of war itself, for more than half a century alienated the two countries from each other, and perplexed with fears and apprehensions all other nations.

"The four persons in question are now held in military custody at Fort Warren, in the state of Massachusetts. They will be cheerfully liberated. Your lordship will please indicate a time and place for receiving them."

This paper was highly characteristic of Seward. The opportunity to perform some great act that would save his country from grave calamity had come at last. He held the pen and he was master of the situation, as had often been the case in much less imposing circumstances in former years. This answer was written in that graceful, flowing, self-confident style peculiar to his ambitious efforts. (It glided lightly over the difficult places, substituting for thorough argument here a plausible assumption, there a crafty implication. It elabo-

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rated and triumphantly dwelt upon the points that were most important to the special purposes. It fascinated and flattered the audience to whom it was chiefly addressed. To most Northerners—who could not judge whether his arguments were sound or fallacious—the idea that by surrendering the Confederates the United States were maintaining their consistency and catching Great Britain in a trap, and the sheer impudence of saying that they would be kept if it were a matter of importance to hold them—these points were greeted with merriment and self-congratulation, and were regarded by a great many as removing all question of fear or humiliation.

Those who had been as mad and reckless as anarchists and would have sacrificed the integrity of the nation to the stubborn resolve to retain the prisoners—and thereby increase their value to the Confederacy ten thousand-fold—soon forgot their folly and joined in the chorus in praise of Seward. The change that came over the learned international lawyer, R. H. Dana, illustrates the magic of Seward's art. In November Dana wrote to Adams, "Wilkes has done a noble thing and done it well"; but subsequently he said: ["Mr. Seward is not only right, but sublime. It was a little too sublimated, dephlegmated, and defecated for common mortals, but I bow to it as to a superior intelligence."] Robert C. Winthrop sent Seward his congratulations, remarking that if it required courage to hold Mason and Slidell in the face of overwhelming and threatening armaments, it required still more courage to give them up in persence of so many violent popular demonstrations on both sides of the Atlantic.² The *New York Tribune* of December 30th said: "We believe the administration is stronger with the people to-day

¹ 2 Adams's *Dana*, 259, 261.

² December 31st. Seward MSS.

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than if Mason and Slidell had never been captured or their surrender had been refused."

London became jubilant at the first rumor of a favorable settlement. Stocks went up and congratulations were general. Under date of January 10, 1862, Adams wrote: "The satisfaction expressed in this city everywhere, excepting among the small society of the Confederate emissaries and the party which habitually looks to war as an attractive pastime, stands in remarkable contrast with the feelings which animated almost everybody six weeks ago." On the receipt of Seward's reply, Russell promptly informed Lyons that it gave "her Majesty's government great satisfaction to be enabled to arrive at a conclusion favorable to the maintenance of the most friendly relations between the two nations."

Seward's comments on his own acts were always interesting. We have noticed how general had been the excitement and determination to keep the Confederate prisoners, regardless of all consequences. On the 27th the Secretary informed Adams that "the United States have maintained calmness, composure, and dignity during all the season while the British people have been so intensely excited, and that in this, as in every other case, they have vindicated not only their consistency but their principles and policy, while measuring out to Great Britain the justice which they have always claimed at her hands." To Weed he wrote the same day: "You will see what has been done. You will know who did it. You will hardly be more able to shield me from the reproaches for doing it than you have been to shield me in England from the reproaches of hostility to that country, and designs for war against it."¹ About a fortnight later a letter to Mrs. Seward contained these sen-

¹ 3 Seward, 34.

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tences: "For the past ten days the public has expressed itself indebted to me for the performance of a task that it had before thought impossible. But the day before it was done it would have voted me incompetent to do any good thing. So, probably, it will be ready to do again, ten days hence."¹ Weed had favored dealing quietly and directly with the question. Seward subsequently explained his own course as follows: "I am under the necessity of consulting the temper of parties and people on this side of the water quite as much as the temper of parties and people in England. If I had been as tame as you think would have been wise in my treatment of affairs in that country, I should have had no standing in my own."²

Mason and Slidell and their secretaries were, on January 1, 1862, taken from Fort Warren to Provincetown, Massachusetts, about forty miles distant, and there put on a British sloop of war. They were then borne to St. Thomas, whence they continued their journey to England.

While they were on their voyage a vessel with a detachment of troops that were expected to be used against the United States, finding the St. Lawrence river full of ice, had entered Portland harbor. When permission was asked for them to cross Maine, Seward promptly ordered that all facilities should be granted for "landing and transporting to Canada or elsewhere troops, stores, and munitions of war of every kind without exception or reservation."³ This was regarded as a most ludicrous climax, and a capital joke on Great Britain; and it was said that the London *Times* refused to publish Seward's letter of permission. It was a very happy ending.

It is important to know whether Seward's argument

¹ 3 Seward, 46.

² 1 Weed, 640.

³ 115 War Records, 186.

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was as sound as it was successful, according to popular opinion. There is no question that the carrying of officers in either the military or naval service of the enemy renders a neutral ship subject to seizure and condemnation. There were no persons in the naval or military service of the Confederacy on the *Trent*, nor were despatches of any kind found; so the seizure of the ship could not be justified by this rule. To defend what had been done, Seward undertook to maintain the novel proposition that Mason and Slidell—diplomatic agents, proceeding between neutral ports in a ship as free from Confederate control as any packet between Calais and Dover—were contraband of war.¹ He based his claim on these three references:

[1.] "Vattel says war allows us to cut off from an enemy all his resources, and to hinder him from sending ministers to solicit assistance." [2.] "And Sir William Scott says you may stop the ambassador of your enemy on his passage."

. . . [3.] "Sir William Scott, speaking of civil magistrates who are arrested and detained as contraband, says:

"It appears to me on principle to be but reasonable that when it is of sufficient importance to the enemy that such persons shall be sent out on the public service at the public expense, it should afford equal ground of forfeiture against the vessel that may be let out for a purpose so intimately connected with hostile operations.'"

It is not a little surprising that Seward should support so novel a claim by citations so vague, and without referring to or explaining the circumstances under which his authorities announced these opinions. What Vattel said was that an enemy's people might be attacked and seized *wherever there was a right to commit*

¹ "Und wenn etwas feststeht, ist es das Princip, dass feindliche, nichtmilitärische Staatsangehörige am Bord neutraler Schiffe der Gefangennahme durch den anderen Kriegführenden nicht unterliegen."—Marquardsen, *Der Trent-Fall*, 74.

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acts of hostility. Vattel gave a perfectly clear illustration of his meaning. There was no right to commit a hostile act on board the *Trent*, unless she had forfeited her neutrality by carrying contraband of war; but that was what Seward was undertaking to prove. He assumed an analogy where there was none, and then used his false assumption to support his contention.¹

Seward's second reference was to Sir William Scott, who was quoting Vattel and considering the case of the *Caroline*. The *Caroline* was a Swedish vessel that had been engaged as one of a fleet of French transports under the control of French military and naval officers.² She thereby ceased to be a neutral and became a belligerent ship; and England, then at war with France, had a right to commit acts of hostility against her. There was no real similarity between the case of the *Caroline* and that of the *Trent*. And what the learned judge actually said furnishes no support for Seward's claim.³

¹ Vattel's passage is as follows: "On the breaking out of a war, we cease to be under any obligation of leaving the enemy to the free enjoyment of his rights; on the contrary, we are justifiable in depriving him of them, for the purpose of weakening him, and reducing him to accept of equitable conditions. His people may also be attacked and seized wherever we have a right to commit acts of hostility. Not only, therefore, may we justly refuse a passage to the ministers whom our enemy sends to other sovereigns; we may even arrest them if they attempt to pass privately, and without permission, through places belonging to our jurisdiction. Of such proceeding the last war furnishes a signal instance. A French ambassador, on his route to Berlin, touched, through the imprudence of his guides, at a village within the electorate of Hanover, whose sovereign, the King of England, was at war with France. The minister was there arrested, and afterward sent over to England. As his Britannic Majesty had in that instance only exerted the rights of war, neither the court of France nor that of Prussia complained of his conduct."—Chitty's translation of Vattel, book 4, chapter 7, section 85.

² Dana's *Wheaton's International Law*, 639, 640.

³ "I have before said that persons discharging the functions of em-

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The third reference was to the decision in the case of the *Orozembo*, and was still more deceptive. The *Orozembo* was an American vessel that had been ostensibly chartered by a merchant of Lisbon, who subsequently had her fitted up for the reception of three military officers, and two persons in the civil departments in the government of Batavia, who, under appointment of the Dutch government, had come from Holland to take their passage to Batavia. This made the *Orozembo* a Dutch transport, subject to seizure and condemnation by Holland's enemy, England. The carrying of military persons was regarded as conclusive evidence of the fact. The judge proceeded to speculate as to the significance of carrying the civil persons:

"In this instance the military persons are three, and there are, besides, two other persons, who were going to be employed in civil capacities in the government of Batavia. *Whether the principle would apply to them alone, I do not feel it necessary to determine. I am not aware of any case in which that question has been agitated*; but it appears to me, *on principle*, to be but reasonable that whenever it is of sufficient importance to the enemy that such persons should be sent on the public service at the public expense, it should afford equal ground of forfeiture against the vessel *that may be let out for a purpose so intimately connected with the hostile operations.*"¹

bassadors are, in a peculiar manner, objects of the protection and favor of the law of nations. The limits that are assigned to the operations of war against *them*, by *Vattel*, and other writers upon those subjects, are, that you may exercise your right of *war against them*, wherever the character of hostility exists. *You may stop the ambassador of your enemy on his passage*; but when he has arrived, and has taken upon himself the functions of his office, and has been admitted to his representative character, he becomes a sort of *middle-man*, entitled to peculiar privileges, as set apart for the protection of the relations of amity and peace, in maintaining which all nations are, in some degree, interested."—6 *Robinson's Reports*, 467-69.

¹ 6 *Robinson's Reports*, 434. Only the words "on principle" are italicized in the original.

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Dana said of the opinion regarding the *Orozembo*: "Even as a *dictum*, it does not touch the case of a neutral vessel not let out as a transport, and merely having civil officers of a belligerent government on board, without other circumstances tending to show the vessel herself to be in the enemy's service."¹

It was by such means that Seward made it appear that Mason and Slidell were contraband of war. After this feat it was like sailing with the wind and the current—in fact, argument was superfluous—to show that Wilkes had a right to stop and search the *Trent*; that the right was lawfully and properly exercised; and that, having found these "contraband persons," he had a right to capture them. Up to this point the Secretary, the captain of the *San Jacinto*, and the stormy multitude of hero-worshippers, were all in perfect accord as to the incident. By a long course of reasoning that was essentially sound, except in the first premise as to contraband, Seward maintained that by releasing the *Trent*, instead of bringing her into port for judicial examination and condemnation, Wilkes let slip the only chance of obtaining a legal justification for the seizure. He dealt mildly and cleverly with "the humane motive" and the "combined sentiments of prudence and generosity" that led to the release, and he declared, "This government cannot censure him for this oversight." So Wilkes himself may even have felt complimented, although the net result was a condemnation of his action.

Seward's course committed him to some very remarkable absurdities. In order to sustain his position, he had to cite irrelevant British decisions and to subordinate the principles and steady practice of his own country, which

¹ Dana's *Wheaton's International Law*, 641; see also 2 Baker's *Halleck's International Law* (1898), 298 ff.

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X favored increasing the rights of neutrals and restricting belligerent interference. (After countless declarations, during eight months, that the Confederates were not belligerents, but insurgents, his whole argument rested on the fact that they were belligerents and that their diplomatic representatives were to be likened to ambassadors of independent states.) In the hope of removing Great Britain's apprehensions, as well as to prevent giving any excuse for an alliance with the Confederacy, he had declared, less than four months before, that no depredations would be committed by citizens of the United States, so far as it could be prevented, upon the vessels or property of any British subjects.¹ He now solemnly enunciated a doctrine that would justify American naval officers in seizing and bringing to New York or Boston neutral packets, wherever they could be found, transporting Confederate diplomatic agents or despatches. French, British, or German ships plying between European ports might be captured in the British Channel, the Mediterranean, or anywhere on the high seas, if they carried Yancey or Rost, or despatches to them, even between England and the Continent. The oft-quoted Scotch verdict of "Not guilty — but don't do it again," was not more illogical than Seward, who undertook to avoid a *casus belli* by maintaining a doctrine that would surely throw the United States into war with every nation against whose ships it should be enforced.²

¹ See *ante*, p. 195.

² As soon as Russell received Seward's communication he informed Lyons that the British government disagreed with some of the conclusions, which he would discuss in a few days, and added: "In the mean time it will be desirable that the commanders of the U. S. cruisers should be instructed not to repeat acts for which the British government will have to ask redress and which the United States government cannot undertake to justify."—115 *War Records*, 1171.

To Seward's interjected and gratuitous declaration that "if the

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The thorough method of Russell's formal reply to Seward's leading contentions in international law indicates that he supposed the note was for the British government. And one would naturally expect Seward to take pride in defending, to the utmost, the position that he had taken in this *cause célèbre*. The document was, indeed, addressed to Lord Lyons, and was forwarded to the British Foreign Office; but it was, in fact, written to the American people. And it had accomplished its chief purpose long before it reached London. So it is not surprising to find that what Seward called his "rejoinder"¹ merely declared: "The differences stated by Earl Russell involve questions of neutral rights in maritime warfare which, though of confessed importance, are not practically presented in any case of conflict now existing between the United States and Great Britain"; and then, in direct contradiction to his argument that diplomatic representatives were contraband of war, he said that the United States would follow or lead in any movement that promised to meliorate the law of maritime war in regard to neutrals.²

Two later Secretaries of State, who were good judges as to what was politic and sound, have criticised Seward's argument. Hamilton Fish wrote at the time:

"In style it is verbose and egotistical; in argument flimsy; and in its conception and general scope it is an abandonment of the high position we have occupied as a

safety of this Union required the detention of the captured persons, it would be the right and duty of this government to detain them," Russell replied that "Great Britain could not have submitted to the perpetration of that wrong, however flourishing might have been the insurrection in the South, and however important the persons captured might have been."—*Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 253.

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 316.

² 115 *War Records*, 1199. Marquardsen tauntingly remarked, after giving the text of Russell's reply of January 23, 1862: "Von einer Replik des amerikanischen Governments auf diese Auseinandersetzung

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nation upon a great principle. We are humbled and disgraced, not by the act of the surrender of four of our own citizens, but by the manner in which it has been done, and the absence of a sound principle on which to rest and justify it. . . . We might and should have turned the affair vastly to our credit and advantage; it has been made the means of our humiliation.”¹

James G. Blaine concludes his criticism of Seward's argument by saying: “It is to be regretted that we did not place the restoration of the prisoners upon franker and truer ground—viz., that their seizure was in violation of the principles which we had steadily and resolutely maintained—principles which we would not abandon either for a temporary advantage or to save the wounding of our national pride.”²

Not only has Seward's dictum, that diplomatic agents are contraband of war, remained unsupported by authorities on international law, but the United States have taken care to prevent the repetition of such a blunder as Wilkes made. Early in the war against Spain the “‘Instructions to Blockading Vessels and Cruisers,’ prepared by the Department of State” said:

“A neutral vessel carrying hostile despatches, when sailing as a despatch vessel practically in the service of the enemy, is liable to seizure; but not when she is a mail packet and carries them in the regular and customary manner, either as a part of the mail in her mail bags, or separately, as a matter of accommodation and without special arrangement or remuneration. The voyages of mail steamers are not to be interfered with except on the clearest grounds of suspicion of a violation of law in respect of contraband or blockade.

hat man nichts weiter vernommen, und in der That möchte es schwer sein, vom Seward'schen Standpunkte aus, in einer ferneren Discussion dagegen aufzukommen.”—*Der Trent-Fall*, 174.

¹ 4 Pierce's *Sumner*, 54.

² 1 *Twenty Years of Congress*, 585.

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“A neutral vessel in the service of the enemy, in the transportation of troops or military persons, is liable to seizure.”¹

The highest type of statesmanship is to extricate one's country from danger in the best way. But that is not the only type. Whether the last opportunity to save the Union should be thrown away depended upon Seward's decision to hold or to release Mason and Slidell. Had he favored retaining them, there was no one that could and would have overcome his influence. Therefore, what was done he did, and but for him it would not have been done. That his argument was so effective, although unsound, was a tribute to his truly marvellous skill in making bricks without straw. It was at least a political masterpiece. And, as the world of politics goes—but not as scholars think it should be—politicians that effectively serve the state are classed as statesmen. It sometimes happens that a general wins a great battle although he violates the most fundamental rules of strategy or tactics. A grateful country, whose failing cause he has saved, will not forget his service, even if military critics demonstrate that he wasted ten thousand lives and realized only a fraction of the possible victory. So, Seward's method was far from perfect, but what he accomplished was one of the greatest feats of the war-period, and has rightly given him lasting fame and honor in American history.

¹ Navy Department, General Order No. 492, June 20, 1868.

CHAPTER XXXIV

SEWARD AND THE POLITICAL PRISONERS, TO FEBRUARY, 1863

OUR record of Seward's various activities in 1861 is not yet complete. Although he performed a much larger proportion of the work of the department than any Secretary of State would now think of doing, it is doubtful if it consumed more than half the time and thought he gave to public affairs. Probably the detection of political offenders and the control of political prisoners were the most distracting of all his cares.

The firing upon the Massachusetts regiment as it was hastening through Baltimore, April 19th, surprised and angered the North. Governor Hicks soon became alarmed lest the sympathizers with secession might become excited beyond control and precipitate a civil war in Maryland. Hoping to avert this, he wrote a letter to Seward requesting that northern troops should be entirely excluded, and suggested that Lord Lyons should be asked to act as mediator between the Washington and the Montgomery governments, so as to prevent an effusion of blood.

Washington was still in extreme danger, and alarm had become panic. It was necessary for the administration to temporize until northern troops should arrive. By direction of the President, Seward declared that "the force now sought to be brought through Maryland is intended for nothing but the defence of this capital," and that the new route *via* Annapolis had been chosen with the expectation that it would be "the least

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objectionable." There had been times, he remarked, when United States soldiers were not unwelcome in that state; and the actual sentiment of national independence was such that no domestic contention "ought in any case to be referred to any foreign arbitrament, least of all to the arbitrament of an European monarchy."¹ These were discreet expressions, considering the dangers of the hour; but the people of the North, who had answered the call to arms with such patriotic enthusiasm, had assumed that the period of hesitation and mere self-defence had ended. Lincoln and Seward at once became objects of criticism and warnings that must have startled them.²

¹ 1 Moore's *Rebellion Record*, Docs., p. 133.

² Moses H. Grinnell, one of the wealthiest and most influential of Seward's friends and followers in New York, wrote to him, April 25th: "The correspondence between the government and Governor Hicks does not suit our people. There is a deep sentiment in this quarter repugnant to concession, and I assure you there will be trouble among our people if there is the least appearance on the part of the government yielding to these rascals. I beg you to treat these *villains* [in Maryland] as they deserve. No more soft words to traitors. The *Post* of last evening gave you hard hits, and, I assure you, your name is freely spoken of and with some censure." Again, the next day, acting as the spokesman of "twenty-five as influential men as we have in New York," he asked that his views be laid before the President, and added that the feeling was so strong that necessity if not patriotism would compel a response to it in order to prevent serious trouble. The correspondence with Hicks, he said, had caused intense indignation on the part of all classes. The New York *Evening Post* of April 24th asked: "How much longer is open rebellion to be met with assurances of distinguished consideration? How many more days will the government spend in elegant letter-writing?" From Erie, Penn., H. Ely reported, April 27th, that there was great dissatisfaction because a clear and free passage had not been made through "the rebel city Baltimore." "*You must demolish it if necessary, and at once*, or the strong indignation sentiment now resting upon the rebels will be turned upon the administration." N. P. Tallmadge, who had all along been for a peaceful solution, declared, April 28th, that the people would "not brook unnecessary delay. They require action—prompt and vigorous action—and they will not hold the admini-

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At first Lincoln was unwilling to do more than order General Scott, in case the Maryland legislature should attempt to arm the people against the United States, to adopt the most efficient measures to prevent it, even to the extent of bombarding their cities, and, "in the extremest necessity, suspending the writ of *habeas corpus*."¹ But there was so strong a current toward secession—and the secession of Maryland would put the national capital at the mercy of the Confederates—that on April 27th, the President authorized Scott to suspend the writ anywhere between Washington and Philadelphia. This rendered it less difficult to deal with the most dangerous men. Soon the authority was used and arbitrary arrests began to be made: the Baltimore marshal of police, the police commissioners, and other men of prominence were seized and sent to a United States fort. According to a plan devised by Seward, Dix, and General Banks, several members of the Maryland legislature that were expecting to push through an ordinance of secession the next day were arrested in September, 1861, and treated like the other political prisoners.

One of the earliest cases was that of John Merryman, arrested near Baltimore by United States military officers because he was lieutenant in a company organized to aid the Confederacy. Chief Justice Taney issued a writ of *habeas corpus* commanding Major-General Cadwalader, who had Merryman in custody, to appear before the court with the prisoner and explain the cause

istration guiltless in any other course. This rebellion must be crushed out in the least possible time. Such a course will be the most economical in money and lives. You must not wait for the deliberations of Congress. Act whilst the spirit is up—let it not die down by the discouragement of delay. Make an example now that will last for all time—so that treason will not again show its head—and so that the southern right of secession will never again be exercised."—Seward MSS.

¹ 2 Lincoln's Works, 88.

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of the arrest and the detention. Following the President's orders, Cadwalader declined to obey. The Chief Justice then delivered an elaborate opinion declaring that Congress alone had a right to suspend the writ. Numerous learned lawyers soon took up this important question, and a great discussion was begun, which is not likely to end so long as the Constitution merely authorizes the suspension without saying whether it shall be decreed by the President or by Congress.

With the administration the question was primarily one of political necessity. It was summed up in this sentence in Lincoln's message to Congress in July: "To state the question more directly, are all the laws but one to go unexecuted and the government itself to go to pieces lest that one be violated?"¹ Lieber said: "The

¹ The following paragraphs from Stanton's order of February 14, 1862, represent the views of the administration as to the political necessity:

"Every department of the government was paralyzed by treason. Defection appeared in the Senate, in the House of Representatives, in the Cabinet, in the Federal courts; ministers and consuls returned from foreign countries to enter the insurrectionary councils or land or naval forces; commanding and other officers of the Army and in the Navy betrayed our councils or deserted their posts for commands in the insurgent forces. Treason was flagrant in the revenue and in the post-office service, as well as in the territorial governments and in the Indian reserves.

"Not only governors, judges, legislators, and ministerial officers in the states, but even whole states, rushed one after another with apparent unanimity into rebellion. The capital was besieged and its connection with all the states cut off.

"Even in the portions of the country which were most loyal political combinations and secret societies were formed furthering the work of disunion, while from motives of disloyalty or cupidity, or from excited passions or perverted sympathies, individuals were found furnishing men, money, and materials of war and supplies to the insurgents' military and naval forces. Armies, ships, fortifications, navy-yards, arsenals, military posts, and garrisons, one after another, were betrayed or abandoned to the insurgents.

"Congress had not anticipated and so had not provided for the

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whole Rebellion is beyond the Constitution. The Constitution was not made for such a state of things; it was not dreamt of by the framers.”¹

Good Unionists frequently complained of having to send their sons to fight Confederates while men more dangerous than if armed remained behind and were undisturbed in furnishing aid and encouragement to the enemy. From the latter part of July, 1861, a very important feature of the war-policy was to make political spies and Confederate sympathizers fear northern prisons as much as soldiers do the enemy's cannon. Until the middle of February, 1862, Seward had supreme control of the system by which nearly a thousand men were seized in different parts of the country and hurried off to one of three or four forts in the East.

The logical chief of such an organization was the Attorney-General or the Secretary of War. The Department of State alone of all the executive branches of the government had no officers in any of the states. Why was such a charge assigned to the member of the

emergency. The municipal authorities were powerless and inactive. The judicial machinery seemed as if it had been designed not to sustain the government, but to embarrass and betray it.”

“In this emergency the President felt it his duty to employ with energy the extraordinary powers which the Constitution confides to him in cases of insurrection. He called into the field such military and naval forces unauthorized by the existing laws as seemed necessary. He directed measures to prevent the use of the post-office for treasonable correspondence. He subjected passengers to and from foreign countries to new passport regulations, and he instituted a blockade, suspended the writ of *habeas corpus* in various places, and caused persons who were represented to him as being or about to engage in disloyal and treasonable practices to be arrested by special civil as well as military agencies, and detained in military custody when necessary to prevent them and deter others from such practices.” —115 *War Records*, 222. See also Henry Wilson's remarks in the Senate, December 16, 1861, *Globe*, 92.

¹ *Life and Letters*, 340.

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Cabinet whose functions were to look after international relations? Important new responsibilities that did not clearly devolve upon others were often assumed by Seward as a matter of course. If he was not the wisest member of the administration, he was the most alert, the most energetic, and the best informed as to the greatest number of important questions. These traits, together with his ambition and Lincoln's wise recognition of his strong qualities, made him not the head of the administration, but in many respects the most active force in it.

Lincoln was responsible for the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus* and Seward for the system, that soon developed therefrom. Because it was arbitrary, largely secret, and altogether unusual, it was either attacked too bitterly or defended without candor. Some of its features bore a striking resemblance to the most odious institution of the *ancien régime* in France—the Bastille and the *lettres de cachet*. A just war and a brutal massacre are very similar in some respects, but the motive may make one noble whereas the other is horrible and fiendish. If Seward had carried on his system in time of peace, he would have been the most despicable tyrant of the century. Its sole moral justification must rest upon its necessity. If there was no other means adequate to cope with the enemies of the government, then history will justify this method. On the other hand, if it was more far-reaching and severe than the circumstances demanded, then Seward will not be held blameless. But let us see first what Seward's system was.

Corresponding with the commercial blockade of the Confederacy, the Secretary of State created a sort of personal blockade of the North by requiring passports of all persons entering or leaving the United States. He appointed special agents at such places as Detroit,

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Niagara Falls, Rouse's Point, and Portland, Maine, to intercept men under suspicion. In nearly every other respect he employed the officers of the other departments and of different localities, such as the military commanders, the United States marshals, and the heads of the municipal police.

The chief places used as prisons were Fort Warren, in Boston harbor, Fort Lafayette, in New York harbor, and Fort McHenry, near Baltimore. Others, like the Capitol prison, which stood near the site of the new Congressional Library building, Forts Delaware, Hamilton, and Monroe, and some of the military camps in the West, were used for political prisoners detained for short periods.

Arrests were made for any one of many reasons: where men were suspected of having given, or intending to give, aid or comfort to the enemy in any substantial way,—as by helping in the organization of troops, by supplying arms or provisions, or selling the bonds of the states in secession; by public or private communications that opposed United States enlistments or encouraged those of the Confederacy; by expressing sympathy with the South or attacking the administration; by belonging to organizations designed to obstruct the progress of the war—in fact, for almost any act that indicated a desire to see the government fail in its effort to conquer disunion. There was, of course, a great difference in the character of the evidence in different cases. Intercepted correspondence often told of treasonable acts or purposes. Perhaps some ardent Unionist, or some one merely for personal reasons, reported that John Smith in Maryland or Michigan was holding communications with, or forwarding the letters of, Confederates in the South or in Canada; that Thomas Jones, of New Orleans, who was to arrive in a few days, was a bearer of important despatches from the Confeder-

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ate commissioners in Europe to their government; that Richard Brown, of Georgia, was in New York selling bonds and was on his way to negotiate a Confederate loan abroad. In not a few cases the first notice the local officer or nearest United States marshal received of the case would be something like this actual telegram :

“DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, *August 17, 1861.*

“*John A. Kennedy, Superintendent of Police, New York:*

“Arrest Charles Kopperl, of Carroll County, Mississippi, now in your city, and send him to Fort Lafayette.

“WILLIAM H. SEWARD.”¹

The person suspected of disloyalty was often seized at night, searched, borne off to the nearest fort, deprived of his valuables, and locked up in a casemate, or in a battery generally crowded with men that had had similar experiences. It was not rare for arrests regarded as political to be made by order of the Secretary of War or of some military officer; but, with only a few exceptions, these prisoners came under the control of the Secretary of State just as if he had taken the original action.

For a few days the new-comer usually varied reflection and loud denunciations of the administration. But the discomforts of his confinement soon led him to seek his freedom. When he resolved to send for friends and an attorney, he was informed that the rules forbade visitors, except in rare instances, that attorneys were entirely excluded, and the prisoner who sought their aid would greatly prejudice his case. Only unsealed letters would be forwarded, and if they contained objectionable statements they were returned to the writer or filed in the Department of State with other papers relating to the case. There still remained a possibility, it was generally assumed, of speedy relief by appeal

¹ 115 *War Records*, 485.

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to the Secretary in person. Then a long narrative, describing the experiences of a man whose innocence was equaled only by his misfortunes, was addressed to the nervous, wiry, all-powerful man keeping watch over international relations, political offenders, and affairs generally. The letter was usually read by the Chief Clerk or Assistant Secretary, and then merely filed. A second, third, and fourth petition for liberation and explanations was sent to the department—but with no result save that the materials for the study of history and human nature were thereby enlarged; the Secretary was calm in the belief that the man was a plotter and could do no harm while he remained in custody.

Meantime it often happened that prisoners that had first been confined in forts west or south of New York were forwarded to Fort Lafayette or Fort Hamilton to prevent overcrowding or to take prominent men far from their homes and sympathizers. This was the case with the Marylanders. A large proportion of those who were held more than a few weeks finally reached Fort Warren.

Ere all this progress in captivity had been made, friends and relatives had strenuously attempted to get a hearing before the Secretary. Probably they had enlisted the influence of some prominent Republican or "old-line" Whig who knew Seward. From different sources came a variety of pleas: the captive was in feeble health; or if, possibly, his associations and sentiments had not been as loyal as could be wished, he had committed no act of treason; or he had an invalid wife and a family of children entirely dependent upon his support; or imprisonment made a martyr of him and was creating much opposition to the government, which would soon disappear if he were given his freedom; or the alleged offence had been too highly colored by a revengeful enemy or by a too zealous official. In

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most instances from one to three months elapsed before definite action was taken by the department. If it seemed likely that the offender would resort to disloyal acts in the future, the appeals were rejected. If the Secretary became convinced that there might be some mistake, he caused a special examination to be made of the case. Where adequate punishment seemed to have been already inflicted, the prisoner was released on condition of swearing allegiance to the United States and of promising to do no act hostile to the prosecution of the war or tending to aid or encourage the Confederates. If the arrest had been made without due cause, no prerequisites of release were required.¹

¹ Here are copies of abstracts of a few cases taken from the Department's Record-book of "Arrests for Disloyalty":

"This man [Dr. Edward Johnson] was arrested by order of General Dix and committed to Fort McHenry about July 8, 1861, and from thence transferred to Fort Lafayette by order of the Secretary of State. There are no papers on file in the Department of State showing on what charges he was arrested. An order was issued from the Department of State, dated September 13, 1861, directing Lieutenant-Colonel Martin Burke to release Johnson on his giving his parole to do no act and to give no information hostile or injurious to the United States. He was released September 17, 1861."—115 *War Records*, 291.

"This person [Joseph T. Ellicott] was arrested by order of General Porter, provost-marshal of Washington, and committed to the Thirteenth Street Prison August 23, 1861. There are no papers on file in the Department of State showing why or on what charges he was arrested. Urgent application having been made for his release, the Secretary of State ordered his discharge on taking the oath of allegiance and stipulating not to enter or correspond with the insurrectionary States. He was accordingly released October 10, 1861."—*Ibid.*, 294.

"Francis M. Fisk is a native of Rhode Island, but a resident of New Orleans. He was arrested at the instance of Governor Sprague at Providence, R. I., charged with the intention of taking his son Frank south to join the rebel army, and committed to Fort Lafayette, August 26, 1861, by order of the Secretary of State, dated August 24, 1861. The charge against Mr. Fisk is supported by the affidavit of James E. Stevens that he boarded with Francis Fisk, son of Francis M. Fisk, in the family of Mrs. Mary Chamberlain; that Francis M. Fisk

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Perhaps the four most famous cases and the ones for which the Secretary was then, and has since been most criticised were those of ex-Senator Gwin, ex-Governor Morehead, of Kentucky, Charles J. Faulkner, and ex-Senator George W. Jones, of Iowa.

It was one of the dreams of the secessionists that California and at least a part of Mexico were to be incorporated into the Confederacy. Gwin's southern antecedents, theories, sympathies, and associations caused a strong suspicion that he was enlisted in this enterprise. In October, 1861, the postmaster of San Francisco wrote to Seward that Gwin, Calhoun Benham, and J. L. Brent had sailed from that port for New York, that they were "rank traitors" and were bound for the South.¹ General E. V. Sumner, who was a passenger on the same ship, became convinced of the disloyalty of the three men and put them under arrest. Several witnesses gave evi-

came to the house of the said Mrs. Mary Chamberlain and told her, 'I am going to take my son Frank south to put [him] in the army.' An order was issued from the Department of State, dated September 30, 1861, for the release of Fisk on his taking the oath of allegiance and giving his parole of honor to do no hostile act, etc. He was accordingly released October 2, 1861."—*Ibid.*, 295.

"William E. Wright, of Marion County, Ky., was arrested by Colonel R. W. Johnson, of the Kentucky Home Guard, on or about the 24th of September, 1861, charged with having taken up arms against the government of the United States or otherwise aiding in the rebellion against the same. After his arrest he was sent by General Anderson to Indianapolis and then by order of the Secretary of State to Fort Lafayette, and was afterward transferred to Fort Warren. It appears by Wright's statements to some of his friends who petitioned for his discharge that he had been to Bowling Green, Ky., to sell horses, which were probably for the military service of the rebels, and that he had been in the State of Tennessee trying to make some money for his family, by what kind of traffic is not stated. On the 11th day of January, 1862, Wright was released from confinement on taking the oath of allegiance with stipulations against future misconduct."—*Ibid.*, 303.

¹ The documents in these cases are printed in 115 *War Records*, 1009-20.

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dence going to show that books or papers, or both, supposed to be treasonable, were thrown overboard by one or more of these men. Shortly after they arrived in New York Seward ordered them to be sent to Fort Lafayette.¹

Fortunately for the prisoners, George D. Prentice, the famous Louisville journalist and stanch Unionist, was Benham's brother-in-law. He hurried to Washington and was surprised by Seward's cordiality and noncommittal answers to his request for the release of the three men. Prentice was given permission to visit them, and was invited to report his impressions. Among other things, he soon represented that before Gwin and Benham sailed they asked General Sumner if they would incur any danger of arrest in embarking on the steamer, and were assured that they would not. This was regarded by the administration as important. Although General Sumner did not intend to give any assurances, the three prisoners were released on parole to come to Washington for an interview. On December 10, 1861, they were unconditionally set at liberty, and an official memorandum stated that "the Secretary of State had been fully satisfied that no one of the parties had any disloyal purpose in his journey, and that the complaint that they bore treasonable despatches or correspondence and destroyed the same on the way to Panama is unfounded."²

It seems likely that this decision was due to Prentice's influence in behalf of a brother-in-law, who may have

¹ On searching Benham a letter written by Gwin, February 8, 1861, was found which contained the following sentences: "The cotton states are out forever. The border states will follow; it is only a question of time. If no collision takes place reconstruction is barely possible. The chances are there will be two republics, North and South, with amicable relations. Time will probably turn it into three." As has been noticed, Seward had been intimate with its writer for a month after that date.

² 115 *War Records*, 1020.

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been suspected chiefly on account of his associations with the disloyal Gwin. This is one of the few cases where Lincoln evidently took the matter out of Seward's hands.¹ Gwin's subsequent actions were so hostile to the interests of the Union that it was a mistake not to restrict his liberty to some locality in the North where he could be watched.²

"Charles S. Morehead, of Kentucky, was arrested on the 19th day of September, 1861, accused of being actively engaged in stirring up and promoting rebellion, and directly charged with treason on the oath of A. H. Sneed, marshal of the United States for Kentucky district," says the Department's Record-book.³ Morehead was one of those border-state "Unionists" of the "white-crow" type, whose sympathies and interests were wholly southern. He had told Lincoln that "the true and wise policy was to withdraw the troops from Fort Sumter, and give satisfactory guaranties to the eight remaining slave-holding states, and that the seven seceding states would, not at once, but ultimately, by the mere force of gravitation, come back, and we should have a safer and firmer bond of union than ever." Otherwise, he said, Lincoln's hands would be stained with blood that could

¹ 115 *War Records*, 1020.

² Toward the end of the sixties Prentice wrote a long letter about this case to John A. Marshall, who printed it in his hysterical "history," *American Bastille*, 617-20. Prentice seemed to think it peculiarly outrageous that Seward did not at once grant his request and answer his letters. He claimed to have written four before receiving an answer. Seward was not under the slightest obligation to reply at all. Only two letters are to be found, and they were both of the same date. The Secretary's reply four days later indicates that only these two letters had been received, and that an earlier answer had not been sent because he had been waiting for an opportunity to consult General Sumner about the alleged assurance against arrest.—115 *War Records*, 1016-18.

³ For this case, see 115 *War Records*, 805-25; 2 Coleman's *Crittenden*, 333-44.

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not be washed off by all the waters of the Atlantic and the Pacific.¹ Later, Morehead went to Georgia and spoke at Macon. His sentiments were not loyal to the Union, or he would neither have been urged to make a speech nor have lived to apologize for it months afterward. As an ex-governor of more than ordinary ability and wealth he had much influence, which he used in opposition to men that were trying to put down secession.²

His arrest was due to military initiative and Seward's relations with Morehead began at Fort Lafayette. It was not altogether illogical for a man believing that the law of gravitation was the only legal bond of union and that he held his "liberty by deed in fee-simple from God Almighty," to feel that he was the victim of malice when his opportunities for opposing the war were cut off. Such good men as Prentice, Guthrie, and Crittenden were soon asking for his release, but this meant next to nothing in respect to the merits of the case. Social and political influences of a personal character were usually the chief factors in such requests.³ Morehead was soon removed to Fort Warren. As he would not take the oath of allegiance, fearing lest he might thereby lose his property within the Confederacy, his confinement continued until January 6, 1862, when he was given his freedom on pledging that he would not enter the state of Kentucky or any state in insurrection,

¹ Morehead to Crittenden, 2 Coleman, 338.

² Leslie Coombs, the veteran soldier and politician, who was helping organize and arm Union soldiers, wrote to Lincoln pronouncing Morehead "The most specious, plausible, dangerous of all our Kentucky traitors. . . . He scattered the evil seeds of treason broadcast through the South by his false statements in public speeches as to the loyalty of Kentucky. If he did not advise, he stimulated the invasion of Kentucky by his misrepresentations."—115 *War Records*, 818.

³ Prentice urged the discharge of another Kentuckian whom he admitted to be a secessionist.—115 *War Records*, 807.

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and that he would hold himself at the disposition of the Secretary of State. Not a trace of evidence has been found to justify his violent denunciations of Seward. If the Secretary had been one-tenth as revengeful as was alleged, he would probably have kept this peculiar patriot in prison throughout the war.

After Charles J. Faulkner, of Virginia, returned from France he was arrested in Washington, in August, 1861, on the ground that he was a secessionist.¹ Faulkner naturally expected that his case would be promptly investigated, but there never was a reasonable doubt about his disloyalty. However, before he had been imprisoned a month, Seward offered him his freedom provided he swore allegiance to the United States. He declined this proposition, declaring that there was no authority for imposing such a condition. Finally, on December 5th, Seward gave him permission to go to Richmond on his promise to return to Fort Warren within thirty days unless he should secure the release of Alfred Ely, a member of Congress from New York, who had gone out to witness the battle of Bull Run and had been taken prisoner. This opportunity was accepted, and the Richmond authorities accordingly consented to make the exchange, which would not have been done if they had not regarded Faulkner as good Confederate legal-tender.

George W. Jones was another patriot believing in a sacred right to aid and sympathize with public enemies. Marshall has made this picturesque soldier of fortune the subject of one of his most touching essays in misrepresentation.² Jones continued to be Minister-resident at Bogota for several months after Lincoln came into office. He was an old friend and correspondent of the

¹ 115 *War Records*, 463 ff.

² *American Bastille*, 375-84. For the official documents in this case, see 115 *War Records*, 1295-1302.

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President of the Confederacy, to whom he wrote in May, 1861:

"May God Almighty avert civil war; but if, unhappily, it shall come, you may—I think would without doubt—count upon me and mine and hosts of other friends standing shoulder to shoulder in the ranks with you and our other southern friends and relatives whose rights like my own have been disregarded by the abolitionists."

By the time Jones reached the United States at least one of his sons had joined the Confederate army, and the correspondence of different members of his family showed sympathies that were thoroughly disloyal. The Record-book states that the arrest was made December 20, 1861, as "a precautionary measure to prevent his carrying into effect a purpose he had repeatedly professed that he entertained—of going south to join his fortunes and his efforts with those of the rebels." On February 22, 1862, he was released on solemnly pledging not to render any aid to the enemies of his country. Subsequently he brought suit against Seward for five thousand dollars damages for false imprisonment. But there was no possibility of success; for the act of indemnity of March 3, 1863, expressly shielded from prosecution for search, seizure, arrest, or imprisonment any person acting by order or authority of the President, or under color of any law of Congress.

There were some unfortunate and even damaging exceptions to the general features already noticed.

The ex-colonel and an ex-lieutenant of some New York troops, called the Empire City regiment, made affidavits before a United States commissioner that one Marcus C. Stanley had been instrumental in breaking up that regiment and in other ways had shown sympathy with the South.¹ The United States marshal in

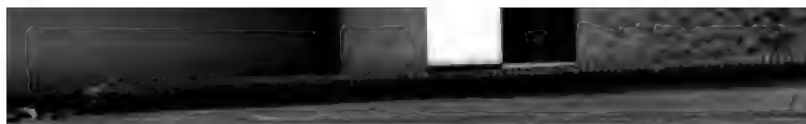
¹ 115 *War Records*, 766 ff.

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New York forwarded the affidavits as if they were reliable, and Stanley was soon in Fort Lafayette. In a few days Seward was informed on good authority that the prisoner deserved the thanks of the community for what he had done, and that he had in other ways helped the cause of the Union; whereas the colonel was a disreputable character, and the regiment was not fit to go forward as it was organized. Seward promptly caused an able and independent police officer to examine the case. The report left no doubt about the injustice of the arrest. Seward ordered Stanley to be released on taking the oath of allegiance, but an innocent man had already been imprisoned for more than a week. Within a fortnight after the Secretary telegraphed, "Arrest Marcus C. Stanley . . . and send [him] to Fort Lafayette," he received this note from the superintendent of police of New York city: "The bearer of this is Mr. Marcus Cicero Stanley, late from Fort Lafayette. He is capable of imparting information to you that may be useful in regard to that institution." However suggestive of a time of revolution this incident may seem, it furnishes the strongest evidence that the persons concerned believed that Seward was open to conviction at all times.

One of the most dangerous yet important features of this extra-legal system was that its best service often required prompt action on mere rumor or a plausible suspicion. In June, 1861, Seward wrote a friendly letter to John E. Ward, who had lately been United States Minister to China, giving him a passport and a permit to send his baggage to his home in Savannah, Georgia. A few months later, when Ward came North on his way to Europe, Seward telegraphed to several different points ordering his arrest and imprisonment in Fort Lafayette.¹

¹ 115 *War Records*, 10, 85.



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The Secretary soon became convinced that he had made a mistake. He promptly did all he could to rectify it.¹

Seward had a correspondence with ex-President Pierce that illustrates more than one phase of the exercise of arbitrary power. It was as exceptional as it was exceptionable; it has been frequently overlooked. Franklin Pierce had been Seward's special aversion and political antithesis for many years. Before the beginning of the war he was such an intense hater of the antislavery tendencies of the North that he believed the South to be the aggrieved party. In April, 1861, he addressed a Union mass-meeting, but he never concealed his dislike for the war-policy of the administration. In the autumn of 1861 he made some speeches in the West which showed that he was one of the most conservative of conservative Democrats.

In many villages and rural districts of the North the narrow-minded enmities between Republicans and Democrats had not yet given way to the generous impulses of patriotism and national defence. At North Branch,

¹ The following letter, taken from 115 *War Records*, 85, is a partial explanation :

" DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, *October 3, 1861.*

" *John E. Ward, Esq.,*

" Care of Messrs. Baring Brothers & Co., London :

" SIR,—I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated Quebec, 27th ultimo, and now take pleasure in transmitting to you the passport in accordance with your request. Owing to the representations of persons who, it appears, accompanied you from the South, it was deemed proper, with a due regard for the public safety, to obstruct you in the progress of your journey ; but circumstances have since transpired which call for the removal of such restrictions, and the accompanying passport is, therefore, forwarded to you. If you deem it proper to destroy this communication you are at liberty to do so.

" I am, your obedient servant,

" WILLIAM H. SEWARD."

Why he should suggest that Ward might want to destroy this letter is not known.

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Michigan, there was a noisy little nest of anti-war Democrats employing their wits in puzzling and annoying the supporters of the administration. One of these tavern-brawlers wrote a long letter, crowded with uncertain signs and vague references to secret plots, one portion of which was as follows:

"President P——, in his passage, has drawn many brave and influential men to the league. P——y, of the L. C. D——t, sent a line to Doctor F—— (by H., the Mormon elder), who as you perhaps know is just across the line from Port H——. The league is doing nobly in M., I., and Wis. He is cautious, but in common with others is gradually preparing the minds of the people for a great change. He expresses a fear that any attempt to draft men will produce a premature outbreak. I think his fear is well founded. A member of the league in Genesee who passed through the woods on his way with despatches to Doctor F—— told that any attempt to draft our friends there would bring on an open rupture. I think our leaders should look to this, as no doubt they will. . . .

"Yours, in the cause,

" *] < 7 || □ "

The letter miscarried and came into the hands of a United States marshal. The writer was detected and taken to Fort Lafayette to spend a few months. He undertook to explain what he had done by saying that it was merely an attempt "to 'sell' the Detroit treason-shrieking press" and to get an amusing revenge on the Republicans, who had freely denounced many of the Democrats as traitors. Of course the United States marshal, the acting United States district attorney, and the detective employed did not believe that the letter was a hoax, but that it referred to the Knights of the Golden Circle; and it was assumed that "President P——" meant ex-President Pierce.¹

¹ For the whole letter and the documents in the Pierce case, see 115 *War Records*, 1244-67.

² A Detroit correspondent also reported to Seward a not positively

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On the strength of such evidence, Seward sent the following note:

"DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, December 20, 1861.

Franklin Pierce, Esq., Concord, N. H.:

"SIR,—I inclose an extract from a letter received at this Department, from which it would appear that you are a member of a secret league, the object of which is to overthrow the government.

"Any explanation upon the subject which you may offer would be acceptable.

"I am, etc.,

"WILLIAM H. SEWARD."

The ex-President's long and solemn answer contained these cutting sentences:

"Surprise, however, only increases as I pass from your note to the extract to which you refer as a sufficient basis for an official communication. Incoherent and meaningless as this extract from the vagaries of an anonymous correspondent seems to me to be, it is not a little singular that it should have been sent for explanation to one who during his whole life has never belonged to any secret league, society, or association. My name does not appear in the extract, and as there is not the slightest ground for any reference to me in the connection indicated, I take it for granted that your inference is wholly erroneous and that neither I nor anything which I ever said or did was in the mind of the writer.

"Nothing but the gravity of the insinuation, the high official source whence it emanates, and the distracted condition of our recently united, prosperous, and happy country could possibly lift this matter above ridicule and contempt."

Seward then replied as follows:

disloyal remark which he had overheard by chance and which came from a man supposed to be the ex-President. At the same time he inclosed two clippings from Detroit newspapers: The *Tribune* pronounced Pierce "a prowling traitor spy," but the charge was plainly made on the merest rumors; the *Free Press* soberly gave its reasons for thinking Pierce to be a sincere Unionist.

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"DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, *December 30, 1861.*

"*Franklin Pierce:*

"MY DEAR SIR,—An injurious aspersion on your fair fame and loyalty came into my hands. Although it was in an anonymous letter, the writer was detected and subsequently avowed the authorship. The document must become a part of the history of the times. I desired that you might know how your name was made use of by a traitor to increase the treason he was encouraging. Unable to prepare a note to you personally, I devolved the duty on the chief clerk of this Department. The manner in which it was done has given you offence. I regret it and apologize for it with the only excuse I can make—namely, the necessity of employing another head to do what ought to be done, and yet which I had not time to do, personally. I place your answer on the files of the Department of State as an act of justice to yourself, and I beg you to be assured that all the unkindness of that answer does not in the least diminish the satisfaction with which I have performed in the best way I was able a public duty with a desire to render you a service.

"I am, with great respect,

"Your obedient servant,

"WILLIAM H. SEWARD.

"It may be proper to state that adopting the form of address to ex-Presidents of the United States used by the late Mr. Webster, I have invariably left off all titles of address as being most respectful."

To say that the writer of the mysterious letter avowed its authorship, and then to conceal the fact that he declared it all a hoax, was an offence that needs no characterization here. Pierce met the transparent insincerity of this letter with well-deserved sarcasm in a reply of January 7, 1862,¹ and supposed the incident closed.

A little later the newspapers again took up the story

¹ "CONCORD, N. H., *January 7, 1862.*

"*Hon. William H. Seward, Secretary of State, Washington:*

"DEAR SIR,—I have the honor to acknowledge the reception of your letter of the 30th ultimo. It could hardly have surprised you



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about the reference to Pierce in the mysterious Michigan letter, and stated that the original was on file in the Department of State. But they neglected to mention that Pierce's answer to it was also there. The ex-President knew how to deal with the annoyance. He caused Senator Latham, of California, to offer a resolution calling for the Seward-Pierce correspondence, "and all the other papers relating to the same."¹ Seward promptly replied, saying that he transmitted therewith a copy of the correspondence "and of all other papers on file here relating to the same." But there was no more reference to the sarcastic letter of January 7th than if it had never been written. Pierce had prepared for such an outcome; so Latham called attention to the omission, and then

to learn that I failed to discover in your official note a desire to render me a service. You will excuse me if I regard even a suggestion from a source so eminent that I am 'a member of a secret league, the object of which is to overthrow this Government,' as rather too grave to have been sent off with as little consideration as a note of rebuke might have been addressed to a delinquent clerk of one of the departments.

"The writer of the anonymous letter, it seems, 'was detected and subsequently avowed the authorship,' and yet I am not advised whether he disavows reference to me or whether there was an attempt to inculpate me in his disclosure. These were the only facts connected with him, his treason, or his confession at all material for me to know. I suppose I am left to infer the latter, because, although my name does not appear in the extract to which my attention was particularly called, you still state that an aspersion upon my 'fair fame and loyalty' came into your hands. I think you will upon reflection arrive at the conclusion that the whole ground upon which the allegation is repeated should, as a simple act of justice, have been placed before me. It was not the manner of your official note, as you seem to suppose, nor any form of address which awakened on my part a deep sense of wrong. These, whatever they may have been, were not worthy of serious notice. The substance was what I intended, as courteously as I could, but very distinctly, to repel.

"I am, very respectfully,

"Your obedient servant,

"FRANKLIN PIERCE."

¹ *Globe*, 1861-62, 1370-71.

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read the missing document to the Senate. Retribution was not more swift than just.

Not one of the political prisoners was brought to trial; as a rule they were not even told why they were arrested. When the pressure for judicial procedure or a candid discussion of the case became too strong to be resisted on plausible grounds, the alleged offender was released. In the border states conviction would have been extremely difficult, and a failure to convict would have reacted against the government. It was different in New England, and in states like New York and Michigan, where the courts were in perfect working order. If adherence there to normal methods would have inspired less fear in evil-doers, it is certain that it would have furnished no basis for criticism, which, at times, was a heavy load for the administration. When there was an outcry on account of the arrest of the Maryland legislators, Lincoln said that "no arrest has been made, or will be made, not based on substantial and unmistakable complicity with those in armed rebellion."¹ A very important feature of the practice of arbitrary arrests, subsequently, was to prevent treason rather than to punish it; and because the aim was precautionary, it was assumed that there was no need of further action after the precaution had been taken. Of course it would have been unsafe to be frank about such a theory.

Because there was no intention to prosecute, no evidence was collected after the arrest was ordered. Unless the evidence happened to be very strong, the *ex-parte* pleas, declarations, and complaints in behalf of the prisoner often indicated that Seward had proceeded without sufficient precaution. The department never made up its case, while that of the defendant is often nearly complete. How few convictions in the criminal courts

¹ Raymond's *Lincoln*, 373.

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would seem to be just if one knew only the grounds on which the grand jury based the indictment, and then, at the trial, heard only the witnesses and the lawyers for the defence. Yet this is a fair illustration of the disproportion shown in the official records. And it is on this account that it is so easy to misrepresent the whole system.

For the general policy as practised toward political offenders in the border states, there is no more occasion to apologize than there is for the fact that cannon caused destruction. The Confederacy found it necessary to adopt a similar system. It is extremely doubtful if Maryland could have been saved from secession and Washington from consequent seizure if the mayor and police commissioners of Baltimore, several members of the legislature, and many prominent citizens of both Maryland and Virginia had not been deprived of their power to do harm. Governor Hicks, who was probably the best judge, approved the arrest of the legislators, and opposed the liberation of some of them even after their successors had been elected.¹ But there were some serious abuses of this arbitrary power in the far northern states.

The least excusable feature was the treatment of the prisoners. Month after month many of them were crowded together in gloomy and damp casemates, where even the dangerous "pirates" captured on privateers, and soldiers taken in battle, ought not to have remained long.² Many had committed no overt act. There were among them editors and political leaders of character and honor, but whose freedom would be injurious to the prosecution of the war. Fortunately for Seward's reputation, their custody belonged to the

¹ 114 *War Records*, 705.

² 2 Coleman's *Crittenden*, 334, 341, 342; 115 *War Records*, 470; *American Bastille*, 652-80, 687 ff.

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War Department. It was largely due to Seward's care, recommendations, interference even, that their unnecessary hardships were not greater.¹

It was inevitable that innocent men should be caught in the dangerous machinery. It offered rare opportunities for the gratification of personal enmities and the display of power on the part of United States marshals and military officers. Seward could not fairly be blamed for things concerning which he himself was deceived, for he often had no time to take precautions. But he should have foreseen that a safety-valve was indispensable in the form of some arrangement whereby all cases should be promptly and impartially reviewed. It happened more than once that men languished in prison for weeks before any one at the department even heard their names.² At the gates of the chief forts there should have been an examining board of two or three able men versed in judging evidence and familiar with the military and political problems in the localities from which the prisoners were taken. They would quickly have separated the innocent from the guilty, and the harmless from the dangerous. They could have decided in a few hours or days as to what restraints or punishments were necessary. Instead of making some such provision, Seward relied upon occasional examinations, chiefly by Seth C. Hawley, the chief clerk of the New York police commission; by Robert Murray, the United States marshal at New York, and by Allan Pinkerton, the head of the United States secret service. This plan was so very inadequate that the prisons became overcrowded.³ Although there is nothing to in-

¹ 115 *War Records*, 86, 37, 121, 123.

² Department's Record-book, *War Records*, 290-348, furnishes evidences of this and of other abuses.

³ The following sentences are from a report made by a United States marshal to Seward, October 28th:

"Amongst the prisoners we found a number of men who occupy

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dicate that Seward was fond of keeping men in confinement—in fact, the contrary seems to have been the case—yet his other duties were so engrossing that he naturally fell into the habit of waiting for political and personal pressure to be exerted before he paid much attention to the individual cases. The guilty could often command this more readily than the innocent.¹

Seward's mental and physical traits were such that he undoubtedly liked the theory, but was greatly annoyed by the exercise of so much authority in this peculiar field. Without doubting his own abilities, he probably realized that the resources of the War Department were much better suited than those of the Department of State to deal with every phase of the question of arbitrary arrests, whether military or political. Accordingly, on February 14, 1862, the whole responsibility was given over to Secretary Stanton.² Soon a great many prisoners were released on parole. In a few days John A. Dix and Edwards Pierrepont were appointed

no social position and who have no standing in the community, and whose room would be more beneficial to the government than the space they occupy. The main difficulty with regard to the comfort of the prisoners in the fort is the want of sufficient room, and by discharging those whom it is of no interest to the government to retain this difficulty would be obviated. These men, it would appear to me, could not do the government any mischief, and it is only a matter of surprise how they came to be arrested. I would, therefore, advise that some competent person or persons should be named by you to examine into the charges against these men and report to you for your final action in the premises."—115 *War Records*, 121.

¹ Morehead told Crittenden that the guilty uniformly got out. (2 Coleman, 335.) His own case, Gwin's, and those of several others who could then command the services of distinguished Unionists, indicate that there was truth in the statement.

² Seward, 72, says that this was done at Seward's suggestion to Stanton. "There is nothing whatever [in the official records] showing that Seward gave up the authority voluntarily or that Stanton sought it."—Leslie J. Perry, of the board of publication of the *War Records*, to the author, July 27, 1898.

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commissioners to examine those still in military custody. They quickly caused nearly one hundred more to be liberated. In a note to Stanton, April 8, 1862, they said: "We have this day examined the cases of several prisoners who have been long in prison and who are detained without just cause."¹

There was current a story that Seward boasted to Lord Lyons that he could ring a little bell and cause the arrest of a citizen of Ohio or order the imprisonment of a citizen of New York, and that no one on earth except the President could release the prisoner. If he made the remark, it is of no special importance. It was a fact that he was almost as free from restraint as a dictator or a sultan, and he was charged with acting accordingly. But the surprising thing is that in the great mass of documents on the subject of political prisoners there are no manifestations of improper motives or of extreme prejudice or of personal considerations except in the Pierce episode. His mistakes, save in one case, were perfectly natural and almost inevitable, considering the constant anxiety of the administration about military affairs in front of Washington, and the need of suppressing words and acts in the North that might indicate to Great Britain and France that the Federal government was declining in strength. But no one will deny that Seward sought and was given too much responsibility.

¹ 115 *War Records*, 277-79, 282.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE QUESTION OF EUROPEAN INTERVENTION, 1862-63

THE outcome of the *Trent* incident disabused the minds of many Englishmen of the belief that Seward desired a foreign war, but it did not affect the economic influences working toward intervention. Louis Napoleon once remarked to one of the Confederates that "the policy of nations is controlled by their interests, and not by their sentiments."¹ The actions of France and of Great Britain during these years furnished excellent illustrations of this rule. It was not difficult to estimate approximately the losses that the two countries were suffering on account of the blockade; but the question that no one could answer was: What will intervention cost if it entails a war with the United States and a general disturbance of European politics? The belief that the North could not conquer the South, and that the attempt would not continue very long, was an additional reason for postponing all direct efforts to influence affairs in the United States.

After the beginning of 1862 there was no substantial reason to doubt the efficiency of the blockade. But the Confederacy argued at one time that it was folly to respect a blockade through which scores of ships ran with impunity; at another time it maintained that the blockade prevented Confederate independence and cut off the exchange of cotton and merchandise, without

¹ Bigelow's *France and the Confederate Navy*, 121.

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which the distress must continue both in Europe and in the South. Plainly there was nothing in international law that would warrant foreign interference. So, if it came, it must be the outgrowth of selfish interests. But some plausible theory or fiction might be regarded as a sufficient excuse. However, Great Britain and France watched the blockade like birds of prey eager for quarry where no risk was involved.

Near the end of 1861 the United States Navy Department purchased a score or two of old vessels, formerly used as whalers or in the India trade, loaded them with stone, and sank them at points in the channels of Charleston harbor and of the Savannah river, where it was expected they would cause accumulations of sand and alluvial deposits, and thus stop navigation. The *New York Times* of December 23, 1861, triumphantly declared that those vessels were filled with Massachusetts rock, and would forever blockade Charleston harbor. Although this device was not entirely novel, it was very unusual, and it was soon popularly known as a blockade by a stone fleet.

In Europe it aroused great indignation, and many pronounced it a violation of the laws of war. Even Cobden called it a "barbarism."¹ If the *Times* was right as to the "forever," the trade of Great Britain and of France was to be permanently injured; and Thouvenel so understood the signs. The general depression of manufacturing and commercial interests in Europe was increasing. "This is attributed to the blockade," Weed wrote in January, 1862. "Europe asks how long this is to last? And finally, assuming the answer, they say, is it not time to recognize the independence of the South?" But for recent successes at Port Royal, he believed that a combination would have been formed against the United

¹ 2 Morley's *Cobden*, 393.

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States. He thought the objections to the "stone fleet" were more a pretext than an expression of a real grievance; yet he was confident that Napoleon had again suggested to Great Britain that they interfere jointly in the affairs of the United States.¹ On January 18th Mann reported to Jefferson Davis that he regarded it as certain that the Emperor was to raise the blockade. In fact, the representatives of both the great powers grew very indignant because they considered that the United States had adopted a peculiarly objectionable method of evading the conventional duties of maintaining a blockade.²

Seward explained that the measures were only temporary expedients. "No American ever conceived that the human hand could place obstructions in a river which the same hand could not remove. No loyal American citizen has regarded this war as one that can have any other than a brief duration, with a termination favorable to the Union, casting upon the Federal government the responsibility of improving the harbors of all the states." Two of the natural channels leading to Charleston harbor had been in no way obstructed, he said.³ As evidence of this, he added that a British steamer laden with contraband had just succeeded in getting in. The London *Spectator* of February 1, 1862, called this "a neat reply." And the question soon ceased to afford any excuse for protests and threatening hints.

Cobden, in December, 1861, believed that three-fourths of the members of the House of Commons would be glad to find an excuse for voting for a dismemberment of the great Republic.⁴ And Weed found the Emperor of the French and all his associates, except Prince Napoleon, in sympathy with the Confederacy.⁵ Since

¹ 3 Seward, 54, 55, 56.

² *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 409, 410, explains Thouvenel's attitude.

³ *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 816.

⁴ 2 Morley, 890.

⁵ 1 Weed, 642.

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October, 1861, Seward had felt much concern lest the French and the British Parliaments on reassembling early in 1862 might assume an unfriendly attitude. "The next will probably be a direct demonstration in Europe for recognition on account of the rigors of the blockade," he wrote to Dayton in an unpublished despatch of January 2, 1862. "If the military and naval movements now imminent shall be as successful as we think, we shall have much confidence in our ability to meet with success the last and greatest foreign difficulty before us." Then he very prudently added: "At the same time, do not lose an opportunity for saying that with our past and coming successes we are quite sure that the need of the blockade will not continue very long. If necessary, speak of it as a thing more and more within our power to modify, if not to terminate altogether." In the same month he said, in a letter to Weed: "But I know this, that whatever nation makes war against us, or forces itself into a war, will find out that we can and will suppress the rebellion and defeat the invaders themselves." Then again a few days later: "Your letters alarm me about the malign intentions on the part of Great Britain and France. . . . It will be a sad day if Europe intervenes. What we can do to prevent it we are doing."¹

Very early in 1862 it was thoroughly announced in Europe that the Federal government was about to begin an aggressive campaign against the Confederacy. This was an admonition against foreign intermeddling just then. France was also very much engrossed in the difficult task of improving the condition of her finances.² In February Weed wrote from London: "All is quiet now, in the expectation that an immense army and navy will show *results*." The news of the Federal victories, especially

¹ 3 Seward, 42, 43.

² Slidell to Benjamin, February 11, 1862.

³ 3 Seward, 62.

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at Forts Henry and Donelson, was additional reason for procrastination. It put at great disadvantage the Confederate sympathizers who, in the House of Commons in March, took part in the debate on the blockade.

Neither the recent Union victories, nor the prospects of still greater successes in the near future, had much effect on the impatience of France. On April 9th, H. S. Sanford, our Minister to Belgium, had a long talk with Thouvenel, who told him that France "*must have cotton*"; that the French people were becoming irritated, and some of the communications he had received from the chambers of commerce were even menacing in their language; and he thought the government of the United States had unnecessarily stimulated this feeling by its vigorous refusal of communication with the South. "It may not be simply a question of policy abroad that we shall have to deal with, but of *public peace at home*."¹ During the same month Weed sent to Seward many warnings of similar tenor.²

About this time Napoleon tried to persuade Great Britain to join him in some kind of a demand on the United States for the purpose of relieving the difficulties; and he used Lindsay, the Confederate ally and Member of the House of Commons, as his spokesman. Russell refused to recognize such an undiplomatic medium. But Napoleon at least convinced Lindsay and Slidell that his efforts had been *bona fide*, and that he would soon act on his own responsibility, unless, in case of the loss of New Orleans, which he did not expect, this might be inexpedient.³

It was hazardous to seem to be depriving Europe of cotton. To let it through the blockade would be to surrender the very means by which that staple had been

¹ Sanford to Seward, April 10, 1862. Seward MSS.

² 3 Seward, 85-97.

³ Slidell to Benjamin, April 18, 1862.

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made worthless to the Confederates. Yet in April Weed wrote from Paris that the United States must try to get free from the charge of being responsible for the cotton famine. "So, if possible, open ports, and let the enemy refuse the cotton."¹ Lincoln's administration had merely been waiting for a suitable opportunity. This was offered by the capture of New Orleans and of Beaufort, North Carolina, near the end of April. By proclamation of May 12, 1862, these ports and Port Royal, in South Carolina, were declared open to commerce. It was expected that this would tend to relieve the tension.

After many weary months of preparation, McClellan was now engaged in the great campaign that was expected to end with the capture of Richmond. That won, it was assumed that the Confederacy would soon collapse, for its northern line of defence between the Alleghenies and the Mississippi had been destroyed and the river was practically open everywhere except in the neighborhood of Vicksburg. But the magnificent Army of the Potomac was soon to be checked in its forward march. Near the end of June inferior numbers of the enemy met and repulsed it; and, after a week of hard fighting, McClellan effected a change of base from the Chickahominy to the James river. For several days McClellan's communications with Washington were entirely cut off. Therefore, there was reason for greater alarm and panic at the capital than had yet been seen.

Seward was one of McClellan's special friends, and had expressed confidence that he would soon conquer the Confederacy. Nevertheless, when the news of McClellan's reverses reached Washington, the Secretary of State was ready with ideas and plans as to how to meet the crisis.²

¹ 3 Seward, 85.

² See *post*, p. 352.

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Lest Europe might draw too damaging inferences, he hastened to inform Adams: "The governors of the loyal states unanimously demand a speedy close of the war, and offer all the forces required at the President's discretion. The President promptly calls for three hundred thousand men. They will be furnished with alacrity."¹ This sufficed for merely a few days. On the 7th he made an explanation of what had taken place in Tennessee, Mississippi, and Virginia. He assumed that Halleck would capture Chattanooga, that Grant would soon be in possession of Vicksburg, and that Farragut's running past the batteries at the latter place had surmounted "the last obstacle of the navigation of the Mississippi." But no such good fortune was to attend the movements of these armies. As to the state of affairs in Virginia, some of Seward's statements were thoroughly misleading, and are to be explained only on the ground that he thought the government's interests demanded a concealment and misrepresentation of the facts. He said that the efficiency of the Federal forces had been improved, while that of the Confederates had been impaired.

"Every one of the battles was a repulse of the insurgents, and the two last, which closed the series, were decided victories. . . .

"If the representative [respective?] parties had now to choose whether they would have the national army where it is and as it is, or back again where it was and as it was, it is not to be doubted that the insurgents would prefer to it the position and condition on the Pamunkey, and the friends of the Union the one now attained on the bank of the James."

Some wit appropriately received similar official announcements with the remark: "Undoubtedly McClel-

¹ 3 Seward, 110.

² *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 125, 126.

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lan has won a great victory, but what the people want to know is who is responsible for it."

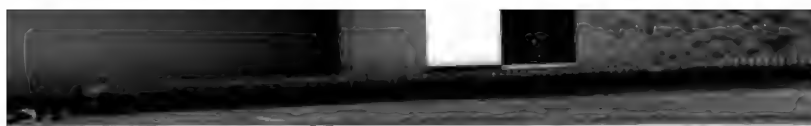
Seward's activity was always especially interesting whenever he became excited, as he had a right to be at this time. Because Lincoln had rejected the propositions of April 1, 1861, and the whole incident had been kept a profound secret, the Secretary was able to make a virtue of our attitude toward Spain and France. On July 10, 1862, he wrote to Dayton :

"We have interfered with the dominion or the ambitious designs of no nation. We have seen San Domingo absorbed by Spain, and been content with a protest. We have seen Great Britain strengthen her government in Canada, and have approved it. We have seen France make war against Mexico, and have not allied ourselves with that republic. We have heard and redressed every injury of which any foreign state has complained, and we have relaxed a blockade in favor of foreign commerce that we might rightfully have maintained with inflexibility. We have only complained because an attitude of neutrality encouraging to rebellion among us, adopted hastily and unnecessarily, has not been relinquished when the progress of the war showed that it was as injurious as it was ill-advised.

"Under these circumstances, if intervention in any form shall come, it will find us in the right of the controversy, and in the strong attitude of self-defence. . . . It will here bring out reserved and yet latent forces of resistance that can never go to rest until America shall be reconquered and reorganized by Europe, or shall have become isolated forever equally from the industrial and governmental systems of that continent. European statesmen, I am sure, before waging war against us, will consider their rights, interests, and resources as well as our own."¹

About a fortnight later Seward learned that in England and France there was again much talk of intervention. A long despatch of July 28th to Adams, and a duplicate to Dayton, explained the aims and difficul-

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 372.



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ties of the war and of foreign relations. It stated that the United States continued to rely "upon the practice of justice and respect of our sovereignty by foreign powers"; but lest this might admit of an erroneous inference, he added: "It is not necessary for me to say that if this reliance fails, this civil war will, without our fault, become a war of continents—a war of the world; and whatever else may revive, the cotton trade, built upon slave labor in this country, will be irredeemably wrecked in the abrupt cessation of human bondage within the territories of the United States." With just enough sarcasm, Seward's spirit and resolution were displayed in these sentences taken from an unpublished despatch to Dayton, also of July 28th:

"France will not conquer both Mexico and the United States with one campaign. Certain politicians about the courts and the press seem to assume that this nation lies at the mercy of any invader or invaders who can muster an army of conscripts or fit out a fleet. We have no such fears that any European government thinks so. We know that in civil war, as well as in others, battles must be lost as well as won, and we should not lose our courage or resolution, even if not merely a battle, but a whole campaign, should result against us. We mean to practise justice and caution, with as much generosity as possible. We expect other powers to do the same, and so we expect to go through this, our unhappy civil war, without the complication of foreign intervention."

The Confederates were at a great disadvantage in trying to enlist active governmental assistance abroad. With their cotton they were, like Archimedes with his lever, confident that they could move the world if they once got a place to stand on. Neither France nor Great Britain would have long delayed recognition or the breaking of the blockade if the Confederacy could have

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 157.

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guaranteed to them that their peaceful relations with the United States would not also come to an end. But it was impossible to give this assurance. Except in moments of enthusiasm, or as a result of theorizing, the Confederates never had much faith in obtaining the direct aid of the British government. After Napoleon's designs in Mexico became apparent, early in 1862, the Confederates believed that he would not allow the North to succeed. The first instructions to Mason and Slidell directed them to try to have cotton excepted from the blockade.¹ But they had not been long at their respective posts before they saw that the task of entering into negotiations of any kind was to be very difficult.

Benjamin, the successor of Hunter as Secretary of State, was a man of quick perception and great enterprise. By the spring of 1862 he concluded that if the Confederacy was to live it must obtain a status among nations, and break the blockade by which it was slowly strangling. On April 12, 1862, he authorized Slidell to negotiate a treaty with France, permitting free entrance to French goods for a period to be specified later, if the Emperor should cease to acquiesce in the blockade. It was well known that Napoleon felt much hampered by the unsatisfactory condition of the national finances. To overcome this difficulty, the Confederacy was willing to give "one hundred thousand bales of cotton of five hundred pounds each, [which] would represent a grant to France of not less than twelve million five hundred thousand dollars." Benjamin thought that "such a sum would maintain afloat a considerable fleet for a length of time quite sufficient to open the Atlantic and Gulf ports to the commerce of France." This amount did not represent the limit to which Slidell might go; it was suggested that the Confederacy would, perhaps,

¹ Benjamin to Slidell, September 23, 1861.



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double the subsidy, and that the interchange of commodities "might absorb half a million or a million of bales." France was expected to send ships for the cotton—which, of course, they could not get until after they had broken the blockade. The ships could bring merchandise, and the profit on it might well be expected to amount to as much as the profit on the cotton; so that France would make at least one hundred million francs, or twenty million dollars. For the purpose of preparing public opinion in France for such a plan, Benjamin sent a special press-agent, Edwin de Leon, with a secret-service fund of twenty-five thousand dollars. Benjamin thought that the carrying out of such an undertaking would practically bring the struggle to a successful termination.¹

Slidell had no difficulty in arranging unofficial meetings with Thouvenel and other members of the Cabinet, all of whom impressed him as favorable to the Confederacy. On July 16th he had his first interview with Napoleon. The commissioner reported the Emperor as saying, that although it was the interest of France that the United States should be a counter-weight to the maritime power of Great Britain, yet his sympathies had always been with the South, and his difficulty was to find a proper means of giving expression to these sentiments. He deeply regretted that France had ever respected the blockade and had not recognized the Confederacy after the battle of Bull Run. But to open the ports forcibly now would be a hostile act; mediation would probably be rejected in insulting terms by the North; a recognition of independence would be of little advantage to the Confederacy, and might involve France in a war; it would quicken the Federal enlistments and strengthen the administration in the ensuing election.

¹ Text in Bigelow's *France and the Confederate Navy*, 176-79.

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Slidell suggested that France should declare Charleston, Wilmington, and some small cities to be open ports, and enforce the decree by arms. He thought it likely "that the northern press and government would bully and menace, but that experience had fully shown what value should be placed on their threats." Then he set forth the proposition as Benjamin had directed, and, in addition, he expressed the belief that the Confederacy could have no objection to making common cause with France against the United States and the republican government in Mexico.

If the very existence of France had depended upon success in Mexico, then the proposition would have been a fair one. As it was, Napoleon was to get, if he could, something like twenty million dollars *after* involving France in a war with the United States. He understood how this would satisfy his sentiment, but not his interests, although Slidell was magnanimous enough to say: "Your majesty has now an opportunity of securing a faithful ally, bound to you not only by the ties of gratitude, but by those, more reliable, of a common interest and congenial habits." What wonder that, as the Confederate commissioner was advocating recognition, the Emperor remarked, "with a very significant smile": "It is very singular that, while you ask absolute recognition, Mr. Dayton is calling upon me to retract my qualified recognition of you as belligerents." Slidell explained this as "but another evidence of the insolence of the Washington government."¹ Although Slidell saw that the Emperor was thoroughly non-committal on the different points of importance, he nevertheless inferred "that if England long preserved [persevered?] in obstinate inaction he would take the responsibility of moving by himself."²

¹ Slidell to Benjamin, July 25, 1862. Bigelow's *France and the Confederate Navy*, 116 ff.

² Bigelow, 125.

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Mason's path in England was even less smooth. The welcome he received did not equal his expectations. On June 23, 1862, he reported to Benjamin that the occupation of the principal southern port by the Federals had destroyed almost all chances of interference in regard to the blockade, and left only the question of recognition. Nevertheless, two weeks later he addressed a long communication to Russell, arguing that the blockade was effective neither in fact nor according to international law.¹ But the foreign office merely acknowledged its receipt without referring to its contents.

Almost simultaneously, in the latter part of July, 1862, Mason and Slidell made formal requests for recognition of the Confederacy by Great Britain and France, respectively. They expected to gain a diplomatic advantage abroad from McClellan's disasters in the Peninsula. Mason urged that an existence of eighteen months was sufficient evidence of stability, and he claimed that his government consisted of thirteen sovereign states, with an area of nearly nine hundred thousand square miles, and a population of twelve million inhabitants. Russell rebutted these claims by referring to Confederate defeats and the general uncertainty of the military status, and then he quoted a recent despatch from Seward in which it was asserted that the white population in the insurrection was under five millions, and that the Southern Confederacy owed its main strength to hope of assistance from Europe.² It would have been difficult to make a more offensive reply; and Mason and Benjamin expressed great indignation about it.

Thouvenel did not take any notice of Slidell's request for nearly a month, and then he merely sent word, unofficially and orally, that he preferred to remain silent unless an answer—which would be unmeaning—should

¹ 55 *British State Papers*, 724-27.

² 55 *State Papers*, 783, 784.

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be insisted upon. Naturally Slidell was chilled, and he reported that he was "getting heartily tired of Paris"; for, as he wrote, "we are hard and fast aground here, and nothing will float us off but a strong and continued current of important successes in the field."¹ So the two great European powers continued to procrastinate.

In July, 1862, Adams feared that intervention in some form would be soon attempted, unless affairs should become more favorable to the North.² Although Seward expressed himself as unwilling to share Adams's apprehensions, nevertheless, on August 2d, he gave specific instructions as to what course the United States Minister to Great Britain should take in certain circumstances. After another exposition, showing that Great Britain could not possibly improve her condition by interfering,³ he said in an unpublished part of the despatch :

"If the British government shall in any way approach you directly or indirectly with propositions which assume or contemplate an appeal to the President on the subject of our internal affairs, whether it seem to imply a purpose to dictate or to mediate or to advise or even to solicit or

¹ To Benjamin in an official despatch and in a personal letter, each of August 20, 1862.

² *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 140.

³ "Is it probable that her intervention would mitigate the war, or alleviate the embarrassment she is suffering from it? The question seems to involve a preliminary one—namely, what is to be the character of her intervention? Is it to be merely a moral one, or an act of recognition, with a declaration of neutrality, but not respecting our blockade, and not refraining and restraining her subjects from violating it? Shall we not, in that case, be justified in withdrawing the relaxation of the blockade we have already made, and in closing the ports we have opened to her commerce? If we should do this, would her recognition of the insurgents shorten the war, or would it alleviate the embarrassment she suffers from it? But it may be answered that she would not consent to surrender these concessions, and would resort to force to save them. Then Great Britain would violate belligerent rights allowed us by the law of nations, and would become an ally of



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persuade, you will answer that you are forbidden to debate, to hear, or in any way receive, entertain, or transmit any communication of the kind. You will make the same answer whether the proposition come from the British government alone or from that government in combination with any other Power.

"If you are asked an opinion what reception the President would give to such a proposition if made here, you will reply that you are not instructed, but you have no reason for supposing that it would be entertained.

"If, contrary to our expectation, the British government, either alone or in combination with any other government, should acknowledge the insurgents, while you are remaining without further instructions from this department concerning that event, you will immediately suspend the exercise of your functions, and give notice of that suspension to Earl Russell and to this department. If the British government make any act or declaration of war against the United States, you will desist from your functions, ask a passport, and return without delay to this capital. I have now, in behalf of the United States and by the authority of their chief executive magistrate, performed an important duty. Its possible consequences have been weighed, and its solemnity is, therefore, felt and freely acknowledged. This duty has brought us to meet and confront the danger of a war with Great Britain and other states allied with the insurgents who are in arms for the overthrow of the Amer-

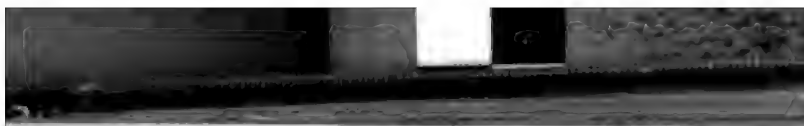
our domestic enemies ; and then she would be at war with us, while, at least, some other commercial state would be maintaining towards us relations of neutrality and peace. Would Great Britain profit by a war with us ? Certainly neither nation could profit by the war while it should be in actual operation. But it is said she might divide and conquer us. What would she gain by that ? . . . But what warrant have the British government for expecting to conquer the United States, and to subjugate and desolate them, or to dictate to them terms of peace ? A war urged [waged] against us by Great Britain could not fail to reunite our people. Every sacrifice that their independence could require would be cheerfully and instantly made, and every force and every resource which has hitherto been held in reserve in a civil war, because the necessity for immediately using it has not been felt, would be brought into requisition. I shall not willingly believe that Great Britain deliberately desires such a war, as I am sure that every honorable and generous effort will be made by the United States to avoid it."—*Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 166.

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ican Union. You will perceive that we have approached the contemplation of that crisis with the caution which great reluctance has inspired. But I trust that you will also have perceived that the crisis has not appalled us."

A "current of important successes in the field" set in for the Confederates earlier than even Slidell could have expected. After McClellan's failure, Pope was put in command of the forces in northern Virginia and promised to wage an aggressive campaign. Lee sent Jackson northward to occupy his attention, while he himself watched McClellan, who was forced to remain inactive by the James river during July, 1862. Early in August it was foreseen that the next great battle was to be nearer to Washington than to Richmond, and somewhat west of a line drawn between the two capitals. Almost the entire month was consumed by manoeuvring and marching and occasional engagements. Finally, on the 29th, the two armies, including Lee's as well as a part of McClellan's troops, met on and near the first battlefield of Bull Run. Pope's army was routed, and narrowly escaped destruction before reaching the fortifications on the Virginia side of the Potomac, in front of Washington. Instead of pursuing Pope, Lee marched northward and crossed the river not far from Harper's Ferry. In an offensive campaign he hoped to swing Maryland into the Confederacy, menace cities and states farther north, pocket the District of Columbia, and capture or scatter the Federal officials. Just at this time the Confederates in the West were very aggressive. Bragg and Kirby Smith were making daring and skilful marches across Kentucky to the Ohio river. It was only a few days later that Price and Van Dorn moved northward from Mississippi to cut off communications between Grant and Rosecrans, in west Tennessee, and Buell near the central part of the state.

There was almost a panic in Washington during the



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early part of September. It was feared that Federal success was the only impossibility after the miserable failure of McClellan's and of Pope's campaigns. What wonder that men looked off from the heights of the District and almost expected to see the banners and hear the tread of conquering Confederates. The crisis, both in military and in diplomatic affairs, seemed to be at hand. Seward must have realized the danger, for near the middle of July he had said that a Union defeat at Richmond or at Washington would probably bring on recognition of the Confederacy, "to be either acquiesced in or met by war."¹ On September 7, 1862, Mercier, the French Minister, announced to the Secretary of State the opinion that it was time to recognize that the South could not be conquered. Was this to be the first step toward that intervention on the part of France and Great Britain that had been talked of so long? Of course much depended on the political status in those countries, but more on the aims of Napoleon and the opinions of Palmerston and Russell.

In France there was no deep-seated dislike of the United States, although the activity of Confederate press-agents had scattered broadcast the impression that the success of their cause would be an advantage to Frenchmen. But public opinion had hardly any effect on the foreign relations of the Second Empire. Napoleon's plans, where definite, were generally the product of somewhat dreamy schemes which were influenced at times by unofficial counsellors. His Ministers were frequently much in the dark as to his aims. They were "little else than upper clerks," wrote Dayton to Seward.² And Slidell, who recognized the fact, quoted one of the members of the French Cabinet as saying that he mere-

¹ Seward, 115.

² These words were left out when the despatch of October 21, 1862, was printed.

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ly played the rôle of supernumerary.' So the Secretary of the United States legation was undoubtedly correct in his conclusion that the rumors about Napoleon's opinions were merely what those about him thought that he thought.' What is historically certain is that the Emperor tried to convince each side that he was especially favorable to it, while, in fact, his sole aim was to use both without scruple and without risk, if possible. With him duplicity was a tool and dishonesty a habit. He wanted France to have cotton less because the manufacturing interests needed it than because the lack of it was likely to embarrass his complex plans. He had already become involved in Mexico. He saw that the Confederacy was his natural ally, yet he had neither the courage nor the decision of character to enter into an alliance with it.

Mercier was supposed to have much influence with Napoleon in regard to American affairs. From the first he had been an impatient sympathizer with the Confederacy, and he was quite devoid of the balance and good judgment that characterized Lord Lyons. However, Seward appeared to regard his peculiarities and the rumors of his decided hostility to the United States as if they were the harmless and natural results of earlier associations with Southerners.' In the spring of 1862

¹ Slidell to Benjamin, November 29, 1862.

² Schuyler to Seward, October 31, 1861. Seward MSS.

³ The following sentences from an unpublished despatch of July 28, 1862, to Dayton show Seward's opinion of Mercier: "As for Mr. Mercier, he is not ill-disposed, but the contrary. His early associations, however, in this country were with the insurgent leaders, who certainly then were very important and powerful personages, for they dictated policies to the previous administration. They are now traitors, every day losing importance and prestige, as all traitors must. But Mr. Mercier does not see this. He is, therefore, understood to be a doubter, a despondent of our success. It is suspected that it is not the result of his constitution. He wants cotton for France, and would like it at any cost. But he is not likely, I think, to counsel any inter-



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Mercier expressed regret that he was not able to go to Richmond to judge of affairs in that capital, and to look after some commercial interests of France. Quite unnecessarily, Seward helped him to make the trip.' As ought to have been foreseen, Secretary Benjamin utilized the meeting with his old friend to show how resolute and hopeful the Confederate leaders were. Mercier's sympathies were strengthened into convictions; and, of course, the visit gave his conclusions on the American question much more weight with the Emperor. K

On September 7, 1862, Seward and Mercier had a conversation about the attitude of France toward the two belligerents. The account that the Secretary sent to Dayton the next day, but which has never been published, is the best explanation of the critical status:

"He [Mercier] proceeded: 'I think now that the Union is no longer possible. We therefore think, my government thinks, that what is best is that which will be nearest to what has been before, what is most like to what the Union has been. So that if there must be two confederacies, then they should be confederated confederacies.' Here Mr. Mercier stopped, and I took up the word, saying: 'Mr. Mercier, you can do this country and your own no greater service than by telling your government at once that this government neither has the thought, nor can entertain it, by whomsoever it may be suggested, that there are or can ever

ference to get it. I have no reason to think he wishes us anything but good, and certainly he does not wish any evil to his own country or her chief. . . . I do not think that Mr. Mercier will immediately have leave to go home. If he should I can hardly suppose that he would be prepared to advise adversely to us. If he should go home he certainly would want to come back. Could he expect to be received here if he should do us injury while at Paris? I think he knows the line where our forbearance must stop. If European statesmen cannot see that they have caused us to isolate ourselves enough already, I think Mr. Mercier can. He would prefer Washington to Richmond as a diplomatic residence—who would not?" Such reasoning was not likely to lead to an accurate judgment.

¹ See *post*, pp. 871, 872.

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be two confederacies here, or any other government than this Union, just as it constitutionally exists and has always been.' He interposed to say that I must confess that circumstances must control, and that they now look very unfavorable. I replied that this government saw nothing in the change of circumstances but a new phase in the ever-changing panorama, which would probably be followed by a new and different phase to-morrow. He said you are expecting a battle soon. I replied: 'Yes. We expect a battle and a victory, but, however this may be, do not for a moment believe that either the President, Congress, myself, or any person connected with this government, will in any case entertain any proposition or suggestion of arrangement, or accommodation, or adjustment, from within or without, upon the basis of a surrender of the Federal Union.' He again replied: 'Certainly, but you know we are friendly, and we are looking to the possibilities of your disappointment, and you would then think it necessary to adopt the best practicable measures for the preservation of the country and its welfare.' I replied: 'I must undeceive you entirely in that respect. Chaos, even if it must result from our efforts to save the Union, could not be worse than the best substitution that could be offered or found for it, if it were to be overthrown. And chaos it must be if, indeed, there were no alternative but attempts at composition of the strife, either on the offer of the insurgents, or through the intervention of any foreign powers, whatever their virtues might be. You know what France did to save her integrity in 1793. Do not for a moment let France believe that the people of the United States will do or suffer less to save themselves from the evils of social dissolution.' I said: 'We shall prosecute this war to its end. We do not distrust our strength. We have actually in our army in the field at least seven hundred thousand men, and we are perfecting a navy which will be equal to any other in the world. Our resources are as fully equal to the exactions upon them as the resources of any power that may assail will be to sustain the assault. So far, then, from entertaining any idea of division of the country, or of new arrangements, we shall maintain it against all who may oppose us.' I remarked: 'This is strong language, but it is the duty of this government to protect the public interests, and vigor of speech, as well as of action, is required in emergencies.' He said: 'Yes; but we have our interests also in the matter which must be looked to.' I replied: 'Certainly, but the sover-

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Eighty of a state is our interest, which in its own councils must be held paramount in its importance to any incidental or foreign question.'

"He then asked me if you had written me anything about Garibaldi and affairs in Italy. I replied that you had not written a word. 'Have you heard something from Mexico?' I replied: 'Not a word.' These questions gave me an opportunity to say: 'Your government can see with what moderation and prudence we are conducting our affairs. We think France has trouble enough in Mexico, and she is likely to have some trouble in Italy. But we have drawn back our hands and sealed our lips in regard to those concerns. We forbear at all points, with all parties, on all sides. We have redressed every complaint that any foreign nation has presented, that was capable of being redressed, and we are ready to refer to impartial convention any that we are unable to redress by our own exclusive authority. We mean, if we come into collision with any foreign power, to have not only the right on our side, but the position of self-defence.'"

In England the political conditions were very different from those in France. The aristocracy, and the manufacturers and shippers whose interests were affected by the war, had grown more outspoken in behalf of the South. Most of the Liberals, the antislavery leaders, the reformers generally, and the poorer classes, were predisposed toward the North; but as yet hardly anything had been done to enlist their support. Except during the excitement about the *Trent* affair, probably there never was a time when more than one-fourth or two-fifths of the population of England would have favored any measure designed to help the Confederacy. However, the friends of the Richmond government were very active in writing, speaking, and planning. London's ponderous "monarch of the press" — "the bad *Times*," as Lincoln jocosely called it, in contrast with "the good *Times*" of New York' — almost daily hurled

¹ Russell's Diary, 572.

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its thunderbolts at the cause of the Union. Likewise, for many of the reviews and periodicals hostile pens were elaborating prejudices and meagre information into sententious dogmatism about the difficulties and inconsistencies of trying to maintain the integrity of the great republic.

But the "cotton famine" was the most powerful influence in behalf of the Confederates. It had grown in intensity during the past year. Excepting the Irish famine, the country had seen no such distress for a century. Because the mills could not obtain cotton at profitable prices, many of them were closed; and tens of thousands of laborers, especially in Lancashire, were saved from actual starvation only by means of the most energetic and extensive system of charity.¹ This great national calamity was known to be due to the war in America, and nearly every one believed that the existing condition of things could not improve much while the conflict continued. Therefore, it worked with powerful leverage toward intervention; and it was strengthened by the opinion of millions that, as the ultimate

¹ "In May of that year [1862], according to the best returns that could be obtained, out of three hundred and fifty thousand mill hands, sixty thousand were out of work altogether; one hundred thousand continued to be fully employed, and one hundred and ninety thousand were working on an average about half-time." The same authority said that "from the commencement of the distress up to the end of June last [1863], about three million pounds have been raised, of which not more than seven hundred and fifty thousand pounds was procured from the parish rates."—39 *North British Review*, 235-39.

The *Spectator* of May 3, 1862, said that the operatives in Lancashire and elsewhere averaged three and one-half days' work per week. "In many districts, such as Wigan, Blackburn, and Rochdale, the distress is of course much greater than this total would give any conception of. In Wigan nearly half of the operatives are totally out of work. . . . In Rochdale nearly a third are quite out of work, and more than half are working less than three days a week."



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failure of Federal aims was certain, some way ought to be found to bring about peace and a restoration of the supply of cotton.

The attitude of the British government is not so clear, or at least not so undisputed. Nations never remember, when they should, that likes or dislikes are pretty sure to be mutual. The North was very eager for the good opinion of England, although the people of the United States had usually sided with Great Britain's enemies. As John Stuart Mill said, the two countries habitually judged of each other by their worst specimens.¹ Englishmen put the worst construction on Seward's acts and expressions, and those of Russell and of Palmerston were similarly regarded in the United States. Nothing that Russell ever said was so well remembered as his remark at Newcastle, in October, 1861, that the North was fighting for empire, while the South was fighting for independence. Palmerston's harmless and true pleasantries about the wonderfully quick movements of the Federals at the battle of Bull Run was enough to convince most Northerners that he was an inveterate enemy to their cause. Gladstone, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer, was so confident of the ultimate success of the Confederates that he threw his influence in favor of the recognition of their independence. But an unbiased reading of Russell's official papers compels the conclusion not only that he meant to assume an attitude between the two belligerents that would give no unwarranted advantages to the Confederates, but also that he was often partial to the other side. His aim and duty were to look after British interests in such a way as international law permitted. Yet, as a rule, Englishmen were so eager to improve their opportunities to profit by the war that the government at times lacked

¹ 2 Motley's *Correspondence*, 115.

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the courage strictly to regard its obligations as a neutral.

As soon as the news of the second battle of Bull Run reached England, Palmerston sent a note to Russell in which he spoke precisely but unsympathetically of the result as "a very complete smashing" of the Federals. He also suggested that, in case Baltimore or Washington should fall into the hands of the Confederates, it would be time for Great Britain and France to address the contending parties and recommend an arrangement upon the basis of separation.¹ Russell expressed the opinion that what was known already would warrant "offering mediation to the United States, with a view to the recognition of the independence of the Confederates." He thought that after the Cabinet agreed upon the plan, it should be proposed to France, "and then, on the part of England and France, to Russia and other powers, as a measure decided upon by us." In case this should fail, he believed that the independence of the Confederacy should be recognized.² The Premier pronounced these ideas "excellent," and recommended that, if France and Russia should agree—"and France, we know, is quite ready, and only waiting for our concurrence"—it would be best to make the offer before the middle of October, then just three weeks off. Mindful that the two armies had probably fought another battle, he concluded that if the Federals had been defeated, they might be "at once ready for mediation, and the iron should be struck while it is hot." "If, on the other hand," he added, "they should have the best of it, we may wait awhile and see what may follow."³

During the first days of September, 1862, McClellan welded together some of the remnants of his own army

¹ 2 Walpole's *Russell*, 349.

² 2 Walpole, 349.

³ 2 Walpole, 350.

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and of that of northern Virginia and hastened up into Maryland. He soon met the Confederates, and on September 17th he defeated them at Antietam. To save what was left, Lee quickly withdrew to Virginia. In the West, also about this time, Bragg and Van Dorn were checked in their bold marches northward and then were driven back.

Napoleon had long been seeking some opportunity for joint interference on the part of two or three powers. But just now he was hedged in by peculiar dangers in Europe, which made it hazardous to do anything likely to lessen his strength at home. It was only a few days before the full news of the Confederate reverses had been received that Thouvenel expressed the opinion to Dayton that there was not a reasonable statesman in Europe who thought the Union could be restored, and he expected that Great Britain would soon recognize the Confederacy.¹ The Emperor discredited the seriousness of the Confederate defeats, for they were highly disappointing; and they left him in deeper perplexity because he desired to give practical and safe expression to his sympathy with the South.

Slidell's account of a second interview with him, on October 28, 1862, makes this plain.² Napoleon felt compelled to act with great caution in regard to American affairs, fearing lest Great Britain, instead of joining his enterprises, might endeavor to embroil him in a war with the United States, which would destroy French commerce. This was evidence of the value of Seward's warnings. Slidell tried to encourage the Emperor with assurances that recognition would bring about peace without giving ground for hostilities—which the United States would shun; but if war should come, the Federal

¹ Dayton to Seward, October 2, 1862. MS. archives.

² Bigelow, 126-32, prints Slidell's account, but erroneously gives October 22d, instead of 28th, as the date.

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navy "would be swept from the ocean, and all their principal ports efficiently blockaded by a moiety of his powerful marine," and either the *Gloire* or the *Normandie* could lay Boston and New York under contribution. He was confident that "mad and stupid as the Washington government had shown itself to be, it still had sense enough not to seek a quarrel with the first power of the world." And yet Napoleon hesitated! "My own preference," Napoleon was quoted as saying, "is for a proposition of an armistice of six months, with the southern ports open to the commerce of the world; this would put a stop to the effusion of blood, and hostilities would, probably, never be resumed. We can urge it on the high grounds of humanity and the interest of the whole civilized world; if it be refused by the North, it will afford good reason for recognition, and, perhaps, for more active intervention." Napoleon's idea was that several of the leading European powers should act together. This was exactly what Palmerston and Russell had contemplated.

The two greatest powers had done much coquetting, and each had seemed to say to the other: If our interests were as great as yours, we should insist on having an end put to the bloodshed, or we should at least demand cotton. Great Britain had evidently been waiting for a state of affairs in the United States favorable to the acceptance of foreign propositions for peace. Much as cotton was needed, the men at the head of the government saw that getting involved in a war would increase, not lessen, misfortunes. Nor could a great maritime power, sure to use blockades as one of her chief resources, afford to be very critical of the Federal blockade. Then, too, the distinguishing feature of Palmerston's foreign policy during these years was distrust of Napoleon.¹ Moreover, the British Premier had begun, in the summer of

¹ Sanders's *Palmerston*, 217.

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1861, to make special efforts to have England supplied with cotton from India and other British possessions.¹ Good results had been realized already. But Napoleon had no such opportunities; while his passion for distant enterprises, and his wish to show to his people that he had great influence with the United States as well as with Mexico, were too strong to be resisted.

Therefore, on October 30, 1862, he instructed the French Ambassadors to Great Britain and to Russia to invite those powers to join France in requesting the belligerents to agree to an armistice of six months, so as to consider some plan for bringing the war to an end. Drouyn de Lhuys, Thouvenel's successor, informed Dayton² that the plan was for the European governments to tender their good offices, merely, and not to go farther unless the belligerents should jointly request it. Great Britain promptly and unqualifiedly declined the proposition. At first thought this is surprising, for she herself had been on the point of making just such a proposal. The complete change of mind on the part of Palmerston and Russell was probably due to three facts, which they had not anticipated: the "smashing" of the Federals at Bull Run did not demoralize the Washington government or lead to other results that were expected; the Confederates had lost in Maryland the prestige they had won in Virginia; and the preliminary proclamation of emancipation³ showed that the war was to become positively antislavery. Even if no rumor of the character of Adams's instructions of August 2d or of Seward's interview with Mercier on September 7th had reached Russell, he certainly knew Seward too well to suppose that he would peaceably accept any sort

¹ Ashley's *Palmerston*, 210, 211.

² *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 405; Dayton to Seward, November 12, 1862. MS. archives.

³ See *post*, p. 337.

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of interference when the loyal people were rejoicing over what they regarded as a great victory. Russell had recently told Adams that it was the purpose of the British government to observe strictly the rule of perfect neutrality in the struggle.¹ But this, of course, did not mean that the independence of the Confederacy might not be recognized in case circumstances should warrant it. Russia's reply to Napoleon was also discouraging. She was unwilling to adopt the proposed course because she believed that it would not lead to peaceful results; yet if France and Great Britain should agree to act together on this question, Russia's representative at Washington would be instructed to lend to his colleagues, "if not his official aid, at least moral support."

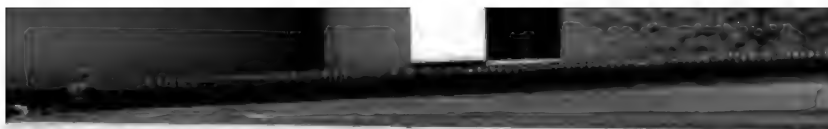
"From Europe we hear little that is definite," wrote Seward more than a month after the battle of Antietam, "but there is manifestly some difficulty there in digesting disappointments." Yet rumors told of unfriendly plans against the United States. So he continued to repeat, in different words, his plausible and resolute arguments showing the necessity for the United States to insist upon absolute sovereignty in every instance. Negotiations for a treaty between the United States and Great Britain for the suppression of the slave-trade had been nearly completed. It was a subject in which British public opinion had taken great interest. In an unpublished despatch of October 25th, he wrote to Adams:

"If the question how such a recognition would affect the action of this government in regard to the convention shall officially arise, you will, in that case, state promptly and without reserve to Earl Russell that all negotiations for treaties of whatever kind between the two governments will be discontinued whenever the complete and unbroken sovereignty of the American republic shall be denied by the government of Great Britain."

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 224.

² 8 Seward, 136.

³ 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 3.



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A few days later he said that the country felt stronger and in better condition to encounter the dangers of intervention than it had at any former time; that if any additional motive were necessary to sustain its resolution to continue independent and sovereign, that motive would be furnished by an attempt at interference on the part of any foreign state.¹

When it became known that France's proposal to Great Britain and Russia had been rejected, Seward wisely concluded not to treat the incident as an alarming one. Napoleon's duplicity was well understood throughout the world, and Seward had seen many evidences of it. It is, therefore, difficult to believe that there was not more diplomacy than sincerity in these unpublished sentences sent to Dayton under date of November 30, 1862: "We shall in all cases speak directly and explicitly to her [France], and we shall continue to understand her exactly in the sense that she expresses. We know the French sentiment of chivalry, and we do not suppose that France will willingly mislead us. In any case it is always more dangerous to mistrust a magnanimous nation than it is to correct mistaken expectations which are the result of a generous confidence." So he decided neither to comment at length on what had "already lost its practical character," nor to ask explanations. This showed great presence of mind. It was in perfect harmony with the rest of the despatch, and it was sufficient to add: "The United States have constantly said to all Europe that they know that the saving of the American Union depends on the American people themselves, and not at all on the policies of foreign states, severally or combined."

When the Confederacy saw that the need of cotton had not sufficient strength to compel an alliance, other induce-

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 231.

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ments were held out. What was offered to France in the spring and summer of 1862 was to be made much more inviting in propositions to both France and Great Britain. In a long despatch of December 11, 1862, Benjamin instructed Mason and Slidell to urge upon these two governments the adoption of certain measures promising great returns. "The almost total cessation of external commerce for the last two years" had "produced complete exhaustion of the supply of all articles of foreign growth and manufacture." The Confederate Secretary of State estimated that there would be a demand for three hundred million dollars' worth of imports within the first six months after a treaty of peace, and that the Confederacy had accumulated cotton, tobacco, and naval stores with exchangeable value much beyond that sum. The North would reap the great commercial advantages of returning peace unless England or France should make special efforts. He suggested that the merchants of neutral nations should purchase the Confederate products in advance. The Confederacy was ready to promise not to destroy them in any case, if the government of the foreign owner would agree to protect them from seizure or destruction by the United States. The establishment of depots of supplies in the West Indies, with improved means of transportation, would enable foreigners to take advantage of the opening of the ports. Of course it was foreseen that, if these things should be brought about, every interested merchant would become an active ally of the Confederacy. But the great panacea, in Benjamin's opinion, would be a complete armistice on land and sea for six months, for it would remove the restrictions to commerce for that length of time.

Undoubtedly Napoleon had had some such dream, except that he expected to gain the lion's share of the profits if his lead should be followed. Now he was in



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a dilemma: if he should give up his plan of telling the belligerents how to settle their difficulties, it would be a confession to the world that he dared not proceed single-handed. If he should undertake to show that his proposition was practicable, might he not embroil himself in just such a war as he had long suspected that Great Britain desired to see him engaged in? He had been wise in one thing: he had repeatedly told the United States that his aims were friendly, and that he did not contemplate doing more than to make recommendations; so he had saved his bridges. It was only a few days after he received the replies of Great Britain and of Russia that the signs from the United States became more favorable to his scheme. The November elections of 1862 indicated a popular disapproval of Lincoln's administration, and many conservative politicians and newspapers advocated a policy that pointed toward a peaceful separation. Later in November came the news of Grant's reverses in Mississippi, but a much more serious matter was the battle of Fredericksburg. Because McClellan had not pursued Lee after the victory at Antietam, but had halted at Harper's Ferry, and then moved slowly into Virginia—all the time displaying an almost contemptuous independence of the administration—he was removed from command. Burnside superseded him, and soon moved the Army of the Potomac from Warrenton to Fredericksburg. After a delay of about a month, of which Lee took advantage, Burnside sent his troops against the Confederates in such an uneven encounter that on December 13, 1862, the Federal soldiers were the victims of terrible and useless slaughter to the number of thirteen thousand. The North trembled with horror, factions increased their wrangling, and many patriotic men despaired when they recalled the fatalities and blunders of the numerous campaigns in Virginia.

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To Napoleon this looked like an opportunity for a hearing. His thoughts, as he wished them to be understood, were expressed in a speech to the French Parliament, and in two instructions from Drouyn de Lhuys to Mercier, all in January, 1863.¹ He told the legislature that "the condition of the Empire would be flourishing if the war in America had not dried up one of the most fruitful sources of our industry," and that he would ask for an appropriation to aid those who had suffered from the misfortune. Mercier was informed that the Emperor would have been "chilled" by "the little success" of his overtures to Great Britain and Russia if he had not been guided by friendship for the United States. His "sentiments" were "too sincere for indifference to find a place" in his thoughts, and he could not be otherwise than "painfully affected, whilst the war continues to rage"! Aside from repeating his well-known opinions about the importance of peace, he now urged that commissioners from the two belligerent governments should meet on neutral ground to devise a means of bringing hostilities to an end.

On February 3, 1863, Mercier presented to Seward the instructions; and three days later the reply of the United States was sent to Dayton.² As on former occasions, Seward diplomatically expressed his belief that friendly motives had actuated France; he spoke of "the earnestness" of the Emperor's "benevolent desire for the restoration of peace," and said that he did not forget the traditional friendship between the two countries, which, he assumed, had suggested this counsel. He maintained that the cause of the Union had steadily advanced; that there were no "North and South, and no southern and northern states," but only "an insurrectionary party, which is located chiefly upon and adjacent

¹ McPherson's *Rebellion*, 345; 6 Moore's *Rebellion Record*, Diary, 35.

² McPherson's *Rebellion*, 345, 346.



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to the shore of the Gulf of Mexico," and that the Federal resources were yet abundant, and its credit adequate to the existing emergency. At best these statements were only partially true, but they had their purpose and effect.

The great strength of the paper was in the directness and brevity of a few paragraphs, the gist of which may be given in these sentences: Could the French Minister of Foreign Affairs fail to see that it would be impracticable for the United States government, while engaged in an attempt to maintain its constitutional authority, to enter into negotiations involving the renunciation of that authority? If commissioners should be appointed they must come to one of three conclusions: that the Union should stand; that it should be dissolved, or that the war should go on. There was no possibility of the first, for the representatives of the Confederacy would surely oppose it, and the loyal people of the South would have no voice in the matter. On the other hand, the Federal government had not the least thought of relinquishing its trust or its aims; "and if it had any such thought, it would still have abundant reason to know that peace proposed at the cost of dissolution would be immediately, unreservedly, and indignantly rejected by the American people. It is a great mistake that European statesmen make, if they suppose this people are demoralized."

This was rightly called a great despatch. It was an impressive suggestion to France to halt. Like the answer in the *Trent* case, it was soon published; it was doubtless written with that end in view, for the public opinion of the North was a very important consideration. Some rather superfluous remarks explanatory of the Constitution, and the declaration that at least the people of the United States were not demoralized, were features sure to elicit popular applause. Henry J. Raymond wrote from New York that Seward's reply met with

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"universal approval" there.¹ And Weed called it the ablest paper his friend had ever written.²

Early in March both houses of Congress passed resolutions declaring that every proposition of foreign interference in the present contest was regarded "as so far unreasonable and inadmissible that its only explanation will be found in a misunderstanding of the true state of the question, and of the real character of the war in which the republic is engaged"; that because it would encourage those in insurrection, Congress would be "obliged to look upon any further attempt in the same direction as an unfriendly act." The warning was positive, but it was expressed in diplomatic language. And the President was requested to have the resolutions transmitted to the Ministers of the United States for communication to the governments to which they were accredited.³ This not only brought all loyal people to a full knowledge of what was to be expected, but it also told the world to keep aloof. Yet this was only giving wider notice of what Seward had said repeatedly, and often in stronger words.

The strength of the influences for or against intervention varied from time to time. Until the spring of 1863, the distress caused by the lack of cotton was the most serious of all the European grievances. Although Great Britain suffered most, the chance of obtaining cotton from new sources—subsequently realized to a great extent—made interference seem less imperative. The certainty of incurring enormous losses in case of a conflict with the United States acted as her chief restraint. Mason was entirely right, as all signs indicated, when, on February 9, 1863, he reported that al-

¹ February 17, 1863. Seward MS.

² R. M. Blatchford to Seward, March 7, 1863. Seward MSS.

³ McPherson's *Rebellion*, 346.

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though both the Ministry and the opposition agreed that separation was final, they did not think the time for recognition had come; for both parties had "a fixed purpose to run no risk of a broil, even far less a war, with the United States." Innumerable and reliable authorities make this much certain: the British Cabinet foresaw that an offer of mediation would be promptly rejected; that merely to recognize the independence of the Confederacy would be futile unless it entailed a war with the United States, and that that would deprive Great Britain of her gains in shipping and multiply her misfortunes. Russell was wise in avoiding the first step lest he might be pushed forward to the last. Napoleon acted from more complex motives. The interests at home and the possible profits in Mexico seemed to order a bold advance; but the danger, in 1862, of being involved in hostilities about Italian affairs, and, in 1863, of being drawn into the Polish revolution, warned him to be cautious and to wait. Seward had said in May, 1862, that intervention was "sure to come just as soon as the American people make up their minds to submit to it." By almost every form of expression—from a simple appeal to moral sentiments down to angry threats that barely missed representing a foreign war as desired—he made it plain that he would resent intermeddling. The action of Congress showed that he would be fully supported. At last no one misunderstood Seward.

After the early part of 1863, some of the conditions changed very rapidly. The pressure for American cotton became less, and the development of a strong antislavery policy on the part of Lincoln's administration had a marked effect abroad, as is soon to be noticed. Intervention continued to be talked of, and would probably

¹ 3 Seward, 96.

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have come in some form if the Federal forces had been defeated at both Vicksburg and Gettysburg. But after July, 1863, as will be seen, the great danger was in connection with the Confederate warships that had already been purchased in England, and others that were expected to be built there or in France.



CHAPTER XXXVI

SLAVERY AND FOREIGN RELATIONS

OF all the questions relating to the Civil War, the two sections have found it most difficult to agree as to the nature of its cause and its purpose. Even the abolitionists with but one idea, who foresaw that secession would destroy slavery, did not at first maintain that emancipation either was or should be the chief aim. Although the Confederates called slavery the corner-stone of their new political edifice, they imagined that the object of their struggle was to secure greater state rights, more commercial freedom, and a harmonious, fraternal government. By the general expression of "war for the Union," or "war for independence," the respective leaders described the immediate aim without going back to the real origin or forward to the probable results of the conflict.

The basis from which Seward argued with foreign powers was that, as the sovereignty of the United States had not been overthrown, the acts and purposes of the Confederates and the question of slavery, were purely domestic affairs which could be ignored or brought to the front, as public sentiment and military interests demanded. So the first instructions to Adams said: "You will not consent to draw into debate before the British government any opposing moral principles which may be supposed to lie at the foundation of the controversy between those states and the Federal Union." And to Dayton he expressed these opinions: "The territories

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will remain in all respects the same, whether the revolution shall succeed or shall fail. The condition of slavery in the several states will remain just the same whether it succeed or fail.”¹

Consistency was not the most conspicuous of Seward's virtues. If he had not been speculating with a particular object in view, probably his conclusion would have agreed with the one announced in 1850, and frequently proclaimed since that time—namely, that a civil war would bring on “violent but complete and immediate emancipation.”² In fact, just a week before the date of the instructions to Dayton, Seward remarked: “We are in a war, and wars work out results not contemplated by either side. It is a war for and against the Union, but no man can foretell how far it will go, or how far it will affect other interests, slavery among the rest.”

A very perplexing philosopher, indeed. But our duty is to try to understand him. In one case he was undoubtedly considering what could not be done according to the strict letter of the Constitution, and in the other what might come as a war-measure, which is often merely a modern and evasive euphemism for the ancient maxim, *Inter arma silent leges*. Undoubtedly each opinion was designed to be serviceable in its time and place.

The heat of revolutionary passion increased with the temperature of the spring and summer of 1861. The abolitionists, now rapidly increasing in number, insisted that to emancipate the slaves of Confederates would quickly end the war. The adoption of such a policy, then, would have seemed to justify what the secessionists had said in the past about Republican purposes; it would have transformed loyal slave-holders into Confederate allies, and have cost Lincoln's administration most of the support it was receiving from the fighting

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 76, 198.

² 1 *Works*, 86.

² 2 Seward, 616.



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element among southern Unionists and northern Democrats and conservatives. The routed and frightened troops from the first battle of Bull Run had hardly reached Washington when Crittenden, whose devotion to the Union depended on no *if*, brought forward a resolution declaring that the war was not for conquest or to interfere "with the rights or established institutions" of the southern states, "but to defend and maintain the supremacy of the Constitution and to preserve the Union with all the dignity, equality, and rights of the several states unimpaired; that as soon as these objects are accomplished the war ought to cease." Almost immediately, and with close approach to unanimity, the members of the House and of the Senate pledged themselves to these declarations. This was a Congressional approval of Seward's theory—so often mentioned during the preceding eight months—that the Union, not slavery, was the paramount issue.

In the next few weeks was passed the first of the measures providing for the confiscation of all property, including slaves, used in support of the insurrection. In various ways slavery was weakened in all those parts of the South to which Federal troops were sent; and in August, 1861, Frémont issued a proclamation in Missouri, declaring the confiscation of the property of all persons that had taken up arms against the United States. But Lincoln ordered that slaves should be prohibited from entering or following the military camps, and he changed the effect of Frémont's proclamation so that only property used against the government should be confiscated. This opposition to purely antislavery aims excited the bitterest criticism among abolitionists; but Lincoln refused to go beyond the course adopted by Congress. The immediate purpose was to save Maryland, and to win Kentucky and as much as possible of Virginia and Tennessee.

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The attitude of the Confederates toward slavery and their interpretations of the motives of the Federal government caused Lincoln's administration much annoyance. While they indignantly denied that they were fighting for the protection and expansion of slavery, they disagreed among themselves both as to their ultimate aims and as to those of their enemies. The first instructions to Yancey, Rost, and Mann authorized these commissioners to offer to assume obligations for all treaties in existence between the United States and Great Britain except the one for the suppression of the slave-trade.¹ On May 18, 1861, Toombs wrote to them that it was obvious that, "however it may be concealed under the guise of patriotism and fidelity to the late Federal compact, the real motive which actuates Mr. Lincoln and those who now sustain his acts, is to accomplish by force of arms that which the masses of the northern people have long sought to effect, namely, the overthrow of our domestic institutions, the devastation and destruction of our social interests, and the reduction of the southern states to the condition of subject provinces."

But it was not long before the Confederates saw their opportunity. On August 14, 1861, the commissioners adroitly attempted to counteract English prejudice against recognizing a slave-holding government by maintaining that the South had not seceded to save slavery, and that it was not the aim of the United States to free the slave, but "to keep him in subjection to his owner, and to control his labor through the legislative channels, which the Lincoln government designs to force upon the master." This was made very plausible by referring to some of the attempts to prevent secession—a constitutional amendment, proposed the previous winter, against governmental interference with slavery,

¹ Toombs to commissioners, March 16, 1861.

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and Lincoln's disavowals of an antislavery crusade. After such an explanation, they felt confident that English sentiment could have no affection for the North; "nay, it would probably become disgusted with a canting hypocrisy which would enlist those sympathies on false pretences." Lest this *exposé* might not suit every contingency, or not be sufficiently damaging, the commissioners were ready to admit that the policy might be changed—"a policy based at present more upon a wily view of what is to be its effect" in the South than upon any honest desire to uphold the Constitution. But in case of a change of purpose, they prophesied, a system of labor would be destroyed that had reared up a vast commerce between America and the great states of Europe, "which, it is supposed, now gives bread to ten millions of the population of those states"; and the result would be "disastrous to the world, as well as to the master and slave."¹

Foreigners generally were unable to understand how slavery could either be the real cause of the war or be in issue when the avowed purpose of one belligerent was to save the Union, while that of the other was to destroy it; and they were so uninformed as to political expediency and the constitutional powers of the central government that they were often resentful because the administration did not announce a policy of emancipation. These circumstances were very favorable to the Confederates, who could use certain half-truths so as to lead to wholly false conclusions. On the other hand, Northerners were amazingly dull in expecting Englishmen to comprehend without a careful explanation that the South seceded because the Republican victory of 1860 meant that the interests of slavery had lost control of the government. Motley expressed the common and erroneous expecta-

¹ *American Annual Cyclopædia*, 1861, 279.

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tion of his section, when, in June, 1861, he wrote: "It is impossible that so simple and noble a proposition as this should fail to awaken the earnest sympathy of nine-tenths of the English nation."¹ But John Bright was almost the only conspicuous political leader abroad that fully satisfied this expectation. Even Cobden was predisposed toward the Confederacy on account of its commercial policy.² Many others were right at times, but they were often impatient and gave undue weight to minor and superficial indications. The nation as a whole at first seemed to look on with cynical neutrality, regarding "the greatest *war of principle*," as Motley complained, as "of no more interest to her, except as it bore on the cotton question, than the wretched squabbles of Mexico or South America."³ Although Russell was not a devoted friend of the United States, he was certainly much less friendly toward their enemies. Most Englishmen agreed with him in the opinion that the conquest of the Confederacy would mean that the United States were to continue to be a great slave power, whereas, in case of the success of the South there would be one smaller slave nation and one new and wholly antislavery nation.⁴

It was a very puzzling task for the government of the United States to counteract the erroneous conclusions of Europeans and yet not to belie the declared

¹ 1 Motley's *Correspondence*, 381.

² 2 Morley's *Cobden* (1881), 372, 373.

³ 1 *Correspondence*, 373.

⁴ "The Liberals are even more divided than the Conservatives. For those who sympathize the most with the position of the free states, as favorable to the extension of domestic slavery, are the least inclined to favor their policy of war against the slave states. . . . They fear a reunion of our states because they think it cannot be effected, excepting at the expense of principle. They favor a separation because it would keep the free states consistent and determined enemies of slavery. This is one strong form of public sentiment in Great Britain, and the force of it accounts for much of the course which has been taken by the government."—Adams to Seward, June 21, 1861. MS. archives.

⁵ See *ante*, p. 173.

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policy of fighting merely for the Union. While it was not a little absurd to expect a moral purpose to be seen where none was avowed, nevertheless the administration preferred to run the risk of not winning the antislavery sympathy of Great Britain and of France rather than to hazard forfeiting the physical support of many in the North and still more in the southern border states. The rapid growth of Confederate military prestige in the summer of 1861 caused the question of slavery to be almost forgotten by foreigners, while the unionist policy was bringing no victories at home and was permitting the development of public opinion abroad that made probable the early recognition of the Confederacy.

In September, 1861, Carl Schurz sent from Spain the first impressive warning of this danger. He said that it was a foregone conclusion that the anti-democratic governments and political parties, and the commercial and manufacturing interests depending upon cotton, were to take sides against the North at the first favorable opportunity. The only statesmanlike way to prevent this would be to win the hearty sympathy of Europeans of liberal instincts and philanthropic impulses.¹ He explained how difficult it was to make foreigners understand why "the free and prosperous North" should insist upon being associated with "the imperious and troublesome slave states," and should resort to the most arbitrary measures of war, which seemed to be as inconsistent with the avowed spirit of American institutions as they were unsuccessful in fact. He made it clear that many adverse influences were taking our cause farther and farther out to sea; that even those who were naturally our friends had come to believe that "the people of the North had set up pretensions which

¹ This is the gist of the first few paragraphs of his long and able despatch of September 14, 1861. Most of the remaining part is printed in 3 Rhodes, 511-13.

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they had neither the courage nor the power to sustain, and the failure of our first military operations was attributed by many to a lack of moral force in our cause." In only two ways could certain nations be prevented from taking unfriendly action: by a "great and decisive military success," or by such governmental measures "as will place the war against the rebellious slave states upon a higher moral basis, and thereby give us the control of public opinion in Europe." Every step taken by the government toward the abolition of slavery would, he said, be equal to a victory in the field, and if we could not win the victory, it was all the more necessary to obtain its equivalent. He prophesied that if it should become clear that the war was one for and against slavery, public opinion would soon be so strong that no European government would dare to side with the Confederacy.¹

Viewed as a problem in foreign affairs merely, the argument was thoroughly convincing; but the main-spring of the actual policy was the supposed domestic necessity. Therefore, Seward replied in generalizations — such as, "civil war must be confined always to the existing con-

¹ On October 3, 1861, John Bigelow wrote to Seward: "The secessionists have found it necessary to proclaim that the Republicans are no more advocates of freedom than the rebels, and that the negro has no better prospects under Lincoln than Davis. They have succeeded in getting the *Times* and other prominent London and Paris journals to take that view. The effect has been very prejudicial to our cause here. M. Laboulaye puts the case as it should be, and it will do us infinite good with the people of France. There is no government in Europe that could stand a month in an alliance with the South if the people could be made to understand that the issue with us was between free and slave labor. Of this I am satisfied. Hence, I regret extremely that the good effect produced by the general tenor of Frémont's proclamation should have been impaired by irregularities or illegalities in its mode of issue, of which the government was constrained to take notice. If the government can avoid expressing itself at all upon the subject we can accomplish all that is necessary here by reference to the past history of the Republican party and 'the inflexible logic of events.'"—Seward MSS.

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dition of political forces and to the public sentiment of the whole country"; "foreign sympathy, or even foreign favor, never did and never can create or maintain any state"; and there "is no nation on earth whose fortunes, immediate or remote, would not be the worse for the dissolution of the American Union," and if that consideration is not sufficient to save us from unjust intervention, then it "must come as a natural incident in our domestic strife." He had no fear that we could not "maintain ourselves against all who shall combine against us"; and there was no one at home who was not more confident of the stability of the Union now than when the Minister to Spain started on his mission.¹ Evidently the Secretary did not wish to discuss the question.

By the time Congress met, in December, 1861, there

¹ "DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON,

"No. 35.

October 10, 1861.

"*Carl Schurz, Esq., etc., etc., etc.,*

"Madrid:

"SIR,—Your despatch of September 14th, No. 18, has been received.

"I have read carefully the views concerning our domestic policy which you have submitted. Of the propriety of your submitting them there can be no question, especially when they are presented with reference to the public sentiment of Europe and the possible action of the governments of that continent.

"It would, however, be altogether inconvenient, and it might be in some degree hazardous for me to engage in explanations of domestic policy in a correspondence which, for all practical purposes, is to be regarded as involving only the foreign relations of the country. Moreover, the policy with which an administration charged with the duty of maintaining itself and preserving the Union shall conduct a civil war, must be confined always to the existing condition of political forces, and to the public sentiment of the whole country.

"I am not surprised when you inform me that sympathies with the United States, regarded as a nation struggling to maintain its integrity against the assaults of faction, are less active in Europe than they might or ought to be in view of the benefits which the republic has already conferred, and the still greater benefits which it promises to confer, on mankind.

"Nations, like individuals, are too much wrapped up in their own

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was an increasing number of men eager to attack slavery wherever they found it vulnerable. The President's annual message proposed that the government should pay for the liberation and colonization of negroes freed by the confiscation act and by state action. He was anxious that the conflict for "suppressing the insurrection" should "not degenerate into a violent and remorseless revolutionary struggle." But there were many persons without such scruples. The House refused to reaffirm the Crittenden resolution about the purpose

interests and ambitions to be deeply concerned by accidents or reverses which befall other nations.

"I can well enough conceive also that the United States in the first emergency might excite more fervent sympathies abroad by avowing a purpose not merely or even chiefly to maintain and preserve their existing constitutional organization, but to modify and change it so as to extirpate at once an institution which is obnoxious to the enlightened censure of mankind.

"But, on the other hand, it is never to be forgotten that although the sympathy of other nations is eminently desirable, yet foreign sympathy, or even foreign favor, never did and never can create or maintain any state, while in every state that has the capacity to live, the love of national life is and always must be the most energetic principle which can be invoked to preserve it from suicidal indulgence of fear of faction as well as from destruction by foreign violence.

"For my own part, it seems to me very clear that there is no nation on earth whose fortunes, immediate and remote, would not be the worse for the dissolution of the American Union. If that consideration shall not be sufficient to save us from unjust intervention by any foreign state or states in our domestic troubles, then that intervention must come as a natural incident in our domestic strife, and I entertain no fears that we shall not be able to maintain ourselves against all who shall combine against us.

"If it were profitable I might reply to your point that our case suffers abroad because we do not win victories so fast as impatient friends could wish. But I have no time for such discussions in the midst of daily duties and cares. It must suffice to say that rebellion, if at all successful, matures fast, acts by surprise, with vehement energy, and wins considerable successes in the beginning. Government gathers its forces more slowly and may well be content if it maintains itself until the revolutionary passion submits to the inevitable law of reaction. Especially must this be so in a federate republican government



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of the war. Soon, in one or both houses, propositions were brought forward to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, to prohibit it in the territories, to prevent the military forces from returning fugitive slaves, and to extend the original confiscation act so as to include the property and slaves of all "rebels." Other antislavery ideas were advanced, and it was all but certain that most of them would be approved. In a special message, in March, 1862, Lincoln advocated governmental payment for slaves voluntarily freed by the different states. It was one of those statesmanlike half-way measures: in recognition of the great straits, it went beyond what was strictly constitutional; but it stopped far short of yielding to the revolutionary demand to strike at slavery in a spirit of impatience and resentment. It was too conservative for the abolitionists and too radical for many of the Democrats and southern Unionists. In May, 1862, General David Hunter, who was in command of the Federal troops in South Carolina, Florida, and Georgia, declared slavery and martial law to be incompatible; and, therefore, he pronounced the slaves to be forever free. This had the true ring and logic of revolution, and it pleased the daring radicals now leading northern sentiment. But Lincoln promptly revoked the order, and tried to keep action within the chosen course. This precipitated upon him and Seward—for many of the emancipationists regarded Seward as his Mephistopheles

like our own. While you, who have gone abroad, are hearing apprehensions of the failure of the government on all sides, there is not one citizen who has remained at home who is not more confident in the stability of this Union now than he was on the day of your departure upon your mission. This confidence is not built on enthusiasm, but on knowledge of the true state of the conflict, and the exercise of calm and dispassionate reflection.

"I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

"WILLIAM H. SEWARD."

—MS.

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—the bitterest, most unreasonable, and most furious attacks of the whole war.¹

Meantime Seward had yielded much less than the President to the antislavery demands. On January 11, 1862, he wrote to Adams: "Every demonstration against slavery puts our assured position in Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri, and Virginia at hazard, and tends to combine the revolting states in mass. With such demonstrations being made, European states seem to think that slavery is to be restored in its ancient strength with the establishment of the Union. Time, if we can get it, will resolve these questions."² This was a truth that the abolitionists denied or disregarded. On the other hand, on February 17th, he undertook to meet the assumption that the Federal government was "favorable, or at least not unfavorable, to the perpetuation of slavery." He characterized it as "one of the most curious and instructive" incidents of the war. However, he marked the despatch confidential, and neither repudiated his unfortunate instructions of the previous April nor removed the prohibition against discussing the question of slavery with other nations. But, by explaining the antecedents of the Republicans, by showing that the army acted as "an emancipating crusade," and by contrasting the probable effects of a victory of one side as opposed to that of the other, he made it plain that, although the policy of the administration was not distinctly antislavery, the results of that policy were conspicuously so. Moreover, the government was actively preparing for compensated emancipation in the District of Columbia.³

Probably it was the outbreak of angry criticism on account of the revocation of General Hunter's sweeping order that awoke in Seward a consciousness of the mis-

¹ See *post*, pp. 361-64.

² MS.

³ *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 37, 38.

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take of trying to avoid a question that really was very important to Federal interests abroad. It was not until May 28, 1862, that he removed the restriction against discussing the meaning of the war in relation to slavery.¹ He merely made an *ad hominem* argument to show that it was European encouragement that was prolonging the conflict; that its continuance would disorganize the social system of the South and transform slave laborers into vagabonds, and ultimately bring on a servile war, which would cause great distress in some of the states of Europe, and "result in an entirely new system of trade and commerce between the United States and all foreign nations."² The suggestion of such possibilities was conducive to careful thought, and did not interfere with the domestic policy. The only mistake was that such ideas were not expressed six or eight months earlier. Undoubtedly the reasons were that Seward had felt confident that the backbone of the Confederacy would be broken in the spring or early summer of 1862, and that attacking slavery would both interfere with the production of cotton—and thereby increase the temptation for foreign intervention—and make more difficult a reconciliation between the two sections.

Slavery strewed thorns in the paths of the Confederate diplomatists. In the summer of 1861 Palmerston

¹ He taxes one's credulity by this explanation for avoiding the question: "It was properly left out of view, so long as it might be reasonably hoped that by the practice of magnanimity this government might cover that weakness of the insurgents without encouraging them to persevere in their treasonable conspiracy against the Union. They have protracted the war a year, notwithstanding this forbearance of the government; and yet they persist in invoking foreign arms to end a domestic strife, while they have forced slavery into such prominence that it cannot be overlooked."—*Dip. Cor.*, 104.

² *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 104, 105. This despatch was sent out as a circular.

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summed up the state of both British and French opinion when he said, "We do not like slavery, but we want cotton, and we dislike very much your Morrill tariff." While the North vastly overestimated the antipathy to the South that slavery would cause among Europeans, the Confederates vastly underestimated it. It took Seward and Palmerston and others more than a year to make even an approximately correct calculation of the importance of the question of slavery in foreign relations. It is not strange that Schurz and Motley and Bigelow and Adams got true reckonings much earlier. Nor is it surprising that slave-holding diplomatists would be mole-eyed in regard to this subject. The Confederacy was crumbling into ruins before her Secretary of State and her commissioners understood that antislavery sentiment in Europe was anything more than sheer perversity and selfishness.

The first despatch from Yancey and Mann, dated London, May 21, 1861, stated that "the public mind here is entirely opposed" to the Confederacy on the question of slavery, and "the sincerity and universality of this feeling embarrass the government in dealing with the question of our recognition." Yet they were confident that the leading public men of all parties regarded it [recognition] as certain, unless the fortunes of war should make independence seem hopeless. On June 1st the commissioners further reported: "The antislavery sentiment is weak, and not active in Paris." Slidell mentioned in his first despatch from the French capital, February 11, 1862, that one often heard regret expressed that slavery existed in the Confederacy, and a hope for its ultimate but gradual extinction; yet nothing was said offensively, and he found it easy to divert the conversation to more agreeable topics. He thought the antislavery feeling in the abstract quite as general there as in England, but there was no considerable class that believed the ex-



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istence of the institution would affect the action of the Emperor and his Cabinet, who were supposed to be quite indifferent to the subject. There was a very marked difference between this report and the one Weed made to Seward about three weeks earlier.¹ Slidell's prejudices shut out the light.

After 1861 there were numerous and wide-spread rumors in both England and France that the Confederate diplomatists were prepared to make concessions to the objections of Europeans to slavery. It was reported very soon after Mason and Slidell reached London that they had asked for British recognition of their government, and had accompanied the request with a promise of ultimate emancipation.² The father of this political gossip, as Adams explained,³ was the wish, on the part of Confederate sympathizers, that some such plea might be urged so as to check the growing antislavery feeling. But before 1865 it would have been impossible to make emancipation a part of the Confederate programme. Nor did more than a very few of the Southerners dream, until it was too late, that such a course would be necessary. Even by November 4, 1862, Mason had not discovered more than that "when, after recognition," he should attempt to negotiate a treaty of amity and commerce, Great Britain would demand, as a *sine qua non*,

¹ 3 Seward, 57.

² The *Spectator*, of January 25, 1862, said: "It is understood, in that indirect but accurate way in which great facts first get abroad, that the Confederacy has offered England and France a price for active support. It is nothing less than a treaty securing free-trade in its broadest sense for fifty years, the complete suppression of the importation of slaves, and the emancipation of every negro born after the date of the signature of the treaty. In return they ask—first, the recognition of their independence; and, secondly, such an investigation into the facts of the blockade, as must, in their judgment, lead to its disavowal." See also 3 Seward, 58, 62.

³ *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 16.

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a clause against the African slave-trade. This was less than it would have been to exact a pledge for emancipation to take effect a century or two in the future, for the African slave-trade was prohibited by the Confederate Constitution. Yet Mason told his English friends that if such a requirement as he mentioned should be demanded, a treaty would be impossible. After consultation with Davis, Benjamin gave instructions, January 15, 1863, that if the provision in the Constitution was not sufficient, the negotiations should be transferred to Richmond, and if the British representative should still persist, "that haughty government will find to its surprise that it needs a treaty of commerce with us much more than we need it with Great Britain."¹ Meantime a new and aggressive policy had been adopted, by the United States.

After the spring of 1862, Lincoln saw that he must yield more to the antislavery men or incur their hostility. He believed that state emancipation with compensation from the central government would be the safest and most practicable way to shatter the foundation of the Confederacy. Would not a proclamation declaring free all the slaves in states and districts in insurrection show loyal slave-holders that slavery was doomed? Could they still refuse to accept compensation for property that would otherwise be lost? He thought that they could not,—forgetting, as Wendell Phillips said, that men argue with their prejudices, not with their reason.

On July 13th Lincoln informed Secretaries Seward and Welles of his intention to issue a proclamation of emancipation. This was his first intimation of a radi-

¹ Both communications are printed in full in an article by John Bigelow in the *Century Magazine*, May, 1891, pp. 115, 120.

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cal change from his previous policy. Seward was so surprised that he did not feel prepared to express a decisive opinion on the subject.¹ On the next day Lincoln made one more effort to induce Congress to accept his plan of compensated emancipation, and he sent a draft of a bill that he desired to have passed. Seward immediately forwarded copies of the message and of the bill to all the United States Ministers in Europe, saying that "there is no reasonable doubt that the policy involved cannot be long in winning the favor of the country, and in assuring the stability of the Union."²

On July 21st and 22d, the President laid before his Cabinet different questions concerning a more aggressive war policy. Among other points, all agreed that it would be well to permit the use of negroes as military laborers; but Lincoln was unwilling that they should be enlisted as soldiers, as General Hunter had recommended. Lincoln also informed the Cabinet of his decision to issue a proclamation announcing his intention to declare free the slaves of those that were in rebellion.

Seward saw no objection to granting General Hunter's request,³ but he had very decided fears and objections in relation to a proclamation, at this time, regarding emancipation. Stanton's memorandum of July 22d says:

"Seward argues: That foreign nations will intervene to prevent the abolition of slavery for the sake of cotton. Argues in a long speech against its immediate promulgation. Wants to wait for troops. Wants Halleck here. Wants drum and fife and public spirit. We break up our relations with foreign nations and the production of cotton for sixty years."⁴

¹ Welles's diary, quoted 6 Nicolay and Hay, 122.

² *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 135.

³ 6 Nicolay and Hay, 124.

⁴ Quoted 6 Nicolay and Hay, 128.

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F. B. Carpenter, who painted the famous picture of the President and his Cabinet at this time, quotes Lincoln as repeating Seward's language as follows:

“““It may be viewed as the last measure of an exhausted government, a cry for help; the government stretching forth her hands to Ethiopia, instead of Ethiopia stretching forth her hands to the government.” His idea,’ said the President, ‘was that it would be considered our last *shriek* on the retreat.’ This was his precise expression. ““Now,” continued Mr. Seward, “while I approve the measure, I suggest, Sir, that you postpone its issue until you can give it to the country supported by military success, instead of issuing it, as would be the case now, upon the greatest disasters of the war.”””¹

The aim that was uppermost in Seward's mind at this time was to ward off European interference by persuading Great Britain and France that the sufferings caused by the lack of cotton would not continue long if these powers should cease giving encouragement to the Confederacy. More than once he had recently warned them that otherwise a servile insurrection, and a consequent cessation in the production of cotton, would result from the prolongation of the war. It alarmed Seward to think that the course proposed might put an end to the extensive slave-labor in the Confederacy, and perhaps bring on a negro insurrection—either of which could have been used as a plausible excuse for intervention. As Secretary of State it was natural that he should regard the foreign relations of the country—then so critical—as of first importance. He was also very impatient with what he regarded as an irrational clamor for making emancipation, instead of national in-

¹ 2 Lincoln's *Works*, 479. It has too often been assumed that this statement was full and precise, although Lincoln made it in February, 1864. Carpenter's recollections of Lincoln's recollections are interesting as corroborative evidence, but they should not control as against Stanton's memorandum or Seward's opinions expressed at other times.



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tegrity, the object of the war. Just a week after this Cabinet discussion of July 22d, Seward explained in a letter to his wife how a proclamation of emancipation would then do no good, but much harm, and added: "Proclamations are *paper*, without the support of armies. It is mournful to see that a great nation shrinks from a war it has accepted, and insists on adopting proclamations, when it is asked for force. The Chinese do it without success."¹ For several weeks, at least, he continued to be opposed to the plan decided upon, and felt a lingering contempt for what must have seemed to him like extravagant buncombe. This is shown in his sarcastic remark to the Secretary of the Treasury early in September: "He said," Chase records in his diary, "some one had proposed that the President should issue a proclamation, on the [expected] invasion of Pennsylvania [by Lee], freeing all the apprentices of that state, or with some similar object." No wonder Chase thought "the jest ill-timed."² A Washington despatch in the *New York Times* of September 27, 1862, said: "Secretary Seward has all along been known to be unfavorable to the act [of proclaiming emancipation], though not as outspoken in his opposition as Secretary Blair."

It was another illustration of Seward's readiness that, although he was opposed to the general plan, some of his ideas should be accepted as very important. Lincoln generously gave him full credit for the suggestion that the proclamation should be "borne on the bayonets of an advancing army, not dragged in the dust behind a retreating one."³ So the draft was laid aside to await the first victory, which was always expected soon.

¹ 8 Seward, 118.

² Warden's *Chase*, 471, 475.

³ Carpenter, 22; 8 Seward, 118. Lincoln himself, a little later, oddly expressed a similar thought: "I do not want to issue a document that the whole world will see must necessarily be inoperative, like the Pope's bull against the comet."—6 Nicolay and Hay, 155.

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Contrary to what has heretofore been believed, Seward was so fearful of the effects of the prospective proclamation that he carefully questioned perhaps the best authority in Europe, evidently expecting to obtain information with which to reinforce his own objections. In a "private" despatch of July 24th he put this searching question to Motley: "Are you sure that to-day, under the seductions and pressure which could be applied to some European populations [powers?], they would not rise up and resist our attempt to bestow freedom upon the laborers whose capacity to supply cotton and open a market for European fabrics depends, or is thought to depend, upon their continuance in bondage?"¹ Motley's answer, beginning with "a thousand times no,"² must have been a great surprise, for it gave new life and force to what the most intelligent representatives of the United States in Europe had been saying, for nearly a year, about an unequivocal antislavery policy.

At home, too, the tide continued to rise. George Bancroft wrote a private note from Newport, August 27, 1862, containing these two sentences of warning: "Are you at Washington aware how fast and how far public opinion has traveled on the subject of emancipation? The people are nearly unanimous now."³

The victory at Antietam furnished an opportunity for issuing the preliminary proclamation of emancipation. When the draft was read to the Cabinet, the President said that his mind was made up except as to minor points. Again Seward's mental alertness was conspicuous. He seems to have made the only suggestions that were considered important and acceptable. He proposed that the proclamation be strengthened by a pledge to "maintain" the freedom it proclaimed, and that the

¹ MS. archives.

² Motley to Seward, August 26, 1862. Seward MSS.

³ Seward MSS.

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colonization of negroes should be voluntary on their part.¹ The published document, dated September 22, 1862, announced the President's intention to continue to urge compensated abolition and voluntary colonization; it threatened emancipation in all the states still in rebellion on January 1, 1863, and promised to recommend to Congress that all persons that had remained loyal throughout the rebellion should be paid for losses of property and slaves.

Seward immediately sent a circular despatch, with a copy of the proclamation, to all the diplomatic and consular officers of the United States in foreign countries. In his instructions to Adams, September 26th, there was a very forcible and statesmanlike summary of the logic of what had been, and was to be, done. The emancipation of the slaves, he said,

“could be effected only by executive authority, and on the ground of military necessity. As a preliminary to the exercise of that great power, the President must have not only the exigency, but the general consent of the loyal people of the Union in the border slave states, where the war was raging, as well as in the free states which have escaped the scourge, which could only be obtained through a clear conviction on their part that the military exigency had actually occurred. It is thus seen that what has been discussed so earnestly at home and abroad as a question of morals, or of humanity, has all the while been practically only a military question, depending on time and circumstances. The order for emancipation, to take effect on the first of January, in the states then still remaining in rebellion against the Union, was issued upon due deliberation and conscientious consideration of the actual condition of the war, and the state of opinion in the whole country.

“No one who knows how slavery was engrafted upon the nation when it was springing up into existence; how it has grown and gained strength as the nation itself has advanced in wealth and power; how fearful the people have hitherto been of any change which might disturb the parasite,

¹ *Warden's Chase*, 492.

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will contend that the order comes too late. It is hoped and believed that after the painful experience we have had of the danger to which the Federal connection with slavery is exposing the republic there will be few indeed who will insist that the decree which brings the connection to an end either could or ought to have been further deferred.

"The interests of humanity have now become identified with the cause of our country, and this has resulted not from any infraction of constitutional restraints by the government, but from persistent unconstitutional and factious proceedings of the insurgents, who have opposed themselves to both."¹

A letter of about the same date, written to his daughter, gives this interesting bit of comment on the proclamation and on himself:

"It is now evident that the proceeding has not been delayed too long. In a short time we shall know whether it has come too soon. I hope that this may not prove to be the case. I was fearful of prematurely giving to a people prone to divide, occasion for organizing parties, in a crisis that demands union and harmony, in order to save the country from destruction.

"Having for twenty years warned the people of the coming of this crisis, and suffered all the punishment they could inflict upon me for my foresight and fidelity, I am not displeased with the position in which I find myself now—of one who has not put forth a violent hand to verify my own predictions."²

The administration's attitude against slavery gave him an opportunity to send to Dayton, October 20, 1862, this eloquent and impressive, although oratorical, warning against European interference:

"Are the enlightened and humane nations, Great Britain and France, to throw their protection over the insurgents now? Are they to enter, directly or indirectly, into this conflict, which, besides being exclusively one belonging to the friendly people of a distant continent, has also, by force

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 202.

² S Seward, 135.

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of circumstances, become a war between freedom and human bondage? Will they interfere to strike down the arm that so reluctantly, but so effectually, is raised at last to break the fetters of the slave, and seek to rivet anew the chains which he has sundered? Has this purpose, strange and untried, entered into the counsels of those who are said to have concluded that it is their duty to recognize the insurgents? If so, have they considered, further, that recognition must fail without intervention; that intervention will be ineffectual unless attended by permanent and persisting armies, and that they are committing themselves to maintain slavery in that manner among a people where slaves and masters alike agree in the resolution that it shall no longer exist? Is this to be the climax of the world's progress in the nineteenth century?"¹

Lincoln's letter of August 22, 1862, to Horace Greeley, declared: "My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that."

After such a candid statement it would have been very shallow hypocrisy for the President to pretend to act like an abolitionist. But, of course, the abolitionists both in America and in Europe quickly claimed more than was true; while the English friends of the South viewed the preliminary proclamation in a very unsentimental manner. The London *Spectator* of October 11, 1862, said: "The government liberates the enemy's slaves as it would the enemy's cattle, simply to weaken them in the coming conflict. . . . The principle is not that a human being cannot justly own another, but that he cannot own him unless he is loyal to the United States." It saw the real reason of the act, and warned Americans not to wonder if the imagination of Europeans was not stirred,

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 898.

² Lincoln's *Works*, 227.

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or if they were not convinced that the system of slavery had been brought to an end. The *Saturday Review*, of the same date, in an article entitled "President Lincoln's *Coup d'État*," said that the proclamation would have been a crime, even if it had been strictly legal. "The President has virtually acknowledged his military failure, and his desperate efforts to procure military support will probably precipitate the ruin of his cause."

As Seward had foretold, the real danger of an antislavery policy was not in the direct effect upon European public opinion, but in the inferences that Europe would draw in case the administration should seem to lose power at home. It is certain that the Republicans did suffer in the elections of 1862 on account of the proclamation; and doubtless Napoleon's actions, already noticed, were somewhat influenced in consequence. But what had been overlooked too long was the fact that all Europeans held antislavery convictions, and were sure to see, sooner or later, that antislavery acts, although prompted solely by military or political considerations, were very desirable.¹ On October 10th Bigelow wrote, saying: "France is unanimously for emancipation, and our cause will now daily grow in grace here as it grows in age."² Dayton thought the proclamation might have a bad effect at first, because of fear lest the production of cotton should be interfered with; but he was confident that in the end it would "commend itself to the enlightened conscience of the Christian world."³ But the most significant report was that from Adams, November 15th, saying that efforts were making in London to organize the antislavery sentiment in our interest.⁴

Before the proclamation of emancipation was issued,

¹ Weed wrote from Paris, January 26, 1863: "If ours was avowedly a war of emancipation, this government would sympathize with us and aid us."—Seward, 57.

² Seward MSS.

³ *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 394.

⁴ *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 3.

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January 1, 1863, emancipation societies were forming in England; and by the time it had crossed the Atlantic all intelligent Englishmen were beginning to gain correct knowledge as to the cause of the war. January had not passed before the first waves of the antislavery storm in America were felt. In a few weeks more, English public opinion showed a surprising awakening. Great public meetings were held in the large cities, and famous speakers addressed audiences infused with the ardor and courage peculiar to national reform movements. The mass of laborers in mines and factories rapidly developed a bitter prejudice against the Confederacy. Impressive antislavery resolutions were passed unanimously, and addresses of congratulation were sent to the President of the United States. As Cobden wrote to Sumner, these remarkable demonstrations of sympathy for the cause of freedom "closed the mouths of those who have been advocating the side of the South."¹ The friends of the North felt thenceforth that they had a cause to plead.

The response from France was less impressive—for the Second Empire was unfavorable to the expression of public opinion—but it left the Confederacy no room to expect popular sympathy. Before the middle of February, 1863, seven hundred and fifty "Protestant pastors of France of every denomination" issued an address to the pastors and ministers of all evangelical denominations in Great Britain, asking them to lead and to "stir up altogether a great and peaceful demonstration of sympathy for the black race"²—which meant to give the North all possible moral support. "An antislavery Conference of Ministers of Religion" was held in Manchester early in June, 1863. The British reply to the French pastors was signed by three thousand nine hundred and

¹ 2 Morley, 406.

² 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 646.

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ninety-seven clergymen.¹ Before the end of June the most reliable authority on this question made it clear that all France was awake—from the unscrupulous Napoleon III. to the most honest peasant. Edwin de Leon, the head of the Confederate press-agency in France, reported to Benjamin that men “connected with the government and enjoying the confidence of the Emperor,” had often told him that France could not “take the lead in acknowledging the Southern Confederacy, without some promise for prospective emancipation.” He called “the old cry of slavery” “the real *bête noire* of the French imagination,” and more of a stumbling-block to recognition in France than in England.²

By the summer of 1863 the utter hopelessness of obtaining recognition from Great Britain had become so manifest that on August 4th it was decided to bring Mason’s mission to an end. From Paris he continued to keep up personal relations with some English sympathizers with the Confederacy. A Southern Independence Association was formed by the sanguine, but they felt compelled to promise to work for the extinction of slavery. The Confederates bewailed this as a fratricidal blow. Finally, in January, 1864, Mason concluded that there was no human influence that could touch men who had gone so far as to allow “the so-called antislavery feeling” to become “a ‘sentiment’ akin to patriotism”; who declined to accept his assurances that, after independence, when they came to know “the true condition of African servitude with us,” “the film would fall from their eyes,” and that meantime the Confederates ought to be regarded as the best judges of their own needs.³

Even Secretary Benjamin now realized that the once boasted “corner-stone” had become a mill-stone about

¹ *Address of the French Protestant Pastors, etc.*, 30.

² *Century*, May, 1891, 118.

³ *Century*, May, 1891, 125.



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the neck of the Confederacy. With apparent amazement, he stated that the first political writers of France employed abolition sentiments as if they were "philosophical axioms too self-evident to require comment"; they assumed that there was "nothing within the range of possibility except the subjugation of the South and the emancipation of the whole body of negroes." Napoleon favored recognition and peace, he believed; but what could he do "in direct contravention of the settled opinion of the people while hampered by the opposition of the English government"?'¹

It cannot be said, even as a figure of speech, that slavery was the cause of the death of the Confederacy, as it surely was of its birth; but after Lincoln's policy of emancipation was understood abroad nothing but great victories and positive evidences of increasing strength could have established Confederate independence. In fact, the new government was a scuttled ship, held back by a dragging anchor.

Probably another reason why Seward was not at first in sympathy with the aggressive antislavery movement was that he expected very important results from a treaty for the suppression of the slave-trade which he negotiated with Great Britain. In a long and elaborate letter of October 17, 1861,² John Jay made many suggestions to Seward as to the importance of taking immediate steps to negotiate a treaty with foreign powers for the suppression of the slave-trade. Neither England nor France could well refuse such an offer, he said; if they should accede, they would acknowledge the integrity of the United States government and make it more difficult to recognize the Confederacy on account of any temporary success. Such an attempt would show the

¹ *Century*, May, 1891, 122.

² Seward MSS.

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true sentiments of the United States and tend to efface the unfavorable impression made in Europe by the return of fugitive slaves and the repudiation of Frémont's proclamation. A treaty of that kind would render nugatory the southern aim to revive the slave-trade, and it might make it impossible for any European power to recognize the Confederacy if it did not give its adhesion to the treaty itself. And the United States could free themselves from the suspicion that they were encouraging the trade by too strict a refusal to permit visitation in time of peace, if they would assent for a limited period to the mutual privilege of visitation within certain lines of latitude and longitude. The suggestion was certainly a sagacious one, and it just suited the peculiar circumstances in which Seward was placed. It gave him an antislavery cause of his own to champion.

The antislave-trade treaty was negotiated by Seward and Lord Lyons in April, 1862, and was subsequently ratified. It provided that the officers of specially instructed ships of the British and of the United States navies might visit such merchant vessels of the two nations as were under reasonable suspicion of being engaged in the African slave-trade. The right of search was to be exercised by vessels of war, and only within the distance of two hundred miles from the coast of Africa, and to the southward of 32° north latitude, and within thirty leagues of the coast of Cuba; and the officer making the search must declare that his sole object was to ascertain if the vessel was engaged in the African slave-trade. Provision was made for three mixed courts—at Sierra Leone, at the Cape of Good Hope, and at New York.

It is said that when Sumner brought to the Department of State the news of the ratification of the treaty without dissent, Seward leaped from the lounge on which he had been resting, and exclaimed: "Good God!

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the Democrats have disappeared. This is the greatest act of the administration."¹ In letters of this time he wrote: "God be praised! We have got through the Senate a treaty that will destroy the slave-trade." "If I have done nothing else worthy of self-congratulation, I deem this treaty sufficient to have lived for."²

Unforeseen circumstances prevented the treaty from assuming any such importance as had been expected. When the Secretary of State called upon the Secretary of the Navy to carry out the stipulations, he was informed that it would be impossible during the war to detail any vessel with specific instructions, for that would be a *pro tanto* locking-up of a portion of the navy, when every ship was needed for the blockade or for independent cruising.³ Subsequently it was arranged that the special instructions should not derogate from the belligerent rights of search. Welles resented what Seward had done, yet this statement as to the result is deemed to be true: "But, in point of fact, I believe not a single capture was made; the African slave-trade had ceased, and the cumbrous and expensive machinery of mixed courts . . . was never put in operation."⁴

One of the strangest incidents of the slavery question was the conversion of the Republican party to the plan of colonizing free negroes in some foreign country. Lincoln's birth in a slave state, and his life-long association with settlers from the South, made it natural that he should be skeptical about the possibility of the black and the white races living together in political equality. Therefore he, like Clay and nearly all southern Whigs of an earlier time, believed that the deportation of the

¹ 4 Pierce's *Sumner*, 68.

² Welles's *Lincoln and Seward*, 134.

³ 3 Seward, 88, 85.

⁴ Welles, 144.

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freedmen to some tropical country would be both practicable and necessary. Next to compensated emancipation, this was one of his favorite ideas. On the other hand, Seward's early associations with the abolitionists of New York and of New England, who had long since pronounced colonization an impossibility, caused him to look with disfavor on such a proposition.¹ Nevertheless, it was his duty to contribute what he could to the experiment.

The preliminary proclamation of emancipation made it urgent for the administration to have an answer to this question: What is to become of the negroes that by the hundred thousand are gaining freedom? Congressional support of a plan of colonization was already assured. Lincoln called for the opinions of the members of the Cabinet. Attorney-General Bates answered at length, September 25, 1862, favoring "the propriety of seeking to make treaties with the American governments within the tropics, and with the European powers which have colonies within the tropics, with a view to obtaining safe and convenient places of refuge for the free colored population of this country"—those already free and those that might become so by the operations of the war.² In a circular despatch of September 30, 1862, to the United States Ministers at London, Paris, The Hague, and Copenhagen, Seward stated the aims of the government. The first point was that emigration should be voluntary. The other stipulations related

¹ "Seward, to whom the subject was not a new one, had no faith in their [the different schemes of colonization] success, and entertained grave doubts of their wisdom. He did not believe that the colored people would be willing to go to distant lands. He thought the United States offered a better field for their labor, and quite as much probability of contentment and happiness as they would find anywhere in the world. 'I am always for bringing men and states *into* the Union,' he said, 'never for taking any *out*.'"—Seward, 227.

² A copy of the memorandum is in the Seward MSS.

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chiefly to the welfare and the treatment of the emigrants after becoming residents of the new state. Lord Russell declined the proposition of the United States as to the British West Indies, and no one of the other replies was satisfactory. On November 18, 1862, Seward again wrote to Adams, as follows:

“While some of them [the projects from foreign countries] are thus ascertained to be impracticable, it may be hoped, nevertheless, that we are drawing near to the discovery of a feasible policy which will solve, perhaps, the most difficult political problem that has occurred in the progress of civilization on the American continent.”

Unfortunately the discovery was never made. The projects that seemed least impracticable were to settle colonies on lands near the harbor of Chiriqui, in the state of Panama, New Granada, and on Île à Vache, belonging to Haiti. A little inquiry caused a doubt as to the title to Chiriqui, but left no doubt that the district was wholly unsuited to the purpose. By special arrangement and under the protection of the administration, nearly five hundred negroes sailed for Île à Vache, in April, 1863. The dream came to a sad end: within a few months the colonists were overtaken by hunger and sickness, so that a large proportion of them died. Within eleven months from the time the hapless expedition sailed, the government had to bring back the survivors, or they, too, would soon have perished.¹

Seward's attitude toward slavery was due to his continued belief that the chief business of the administration was to restore the Union, and that any attempt to make emancipation a leading aim—unless a clear majority of the loyal voters demanded it—would be hazardous

¹ The particulars of the whole question of colonization are given in 6 Nicolay and Hay, 354-67.

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and unwise. Being convinced that the election of Lincoln had sounded the death-knell of slavery as a power in national politics, and that the war was inevitably antislavery in its effects, he was confident that the institution would rapidly decline in strength, even without being made the object of Federal attack.¹ The position was true and statesmanlike, although military failures, the rapid growth of the power of the radicals, and the interests of the United States abroad compelled him to yield to the new and rapidly changing conditions.

¹ Carpenter's *Six Months in the White House*, 72 ; 1 Dicey's *Federal States*, 232-34.



CHAPTER XXXVII

SOME MISCELLANEOUS ACTIVITIES AND TRIALS

SEWARD was an eccentric and many-sided political genius. He illustrated Mirabeau's theory that "Jacobins that are ministers will not be Jacobin ministers." Before December, 1860, he had been chief of the radicals, and his ambition had been primarily personal and partisan. Since the summer of 1861 probably no public man of the time had been governed by more patriotic impulses. Yet he desired as ardently as ever to be master of affairs, and it is doubtful if it ever occurred to him that he could not best perform any task falling to the President or to any member of the Cabinet. When Cyrus W. Field sent him a letter of condolence on his defeat at Chicago, he wrote: "If the alternative were presented to a wise man, he might well seek rather to have his countrymen regret that he had not been President than to be President."¹ Seward aimed to show such abilities in saving the Union—notwithstanding popular blunders, sectional disloyalty, and the malice of factions—that the mistake at Chicago should become apparent to all. Although his patriotism was egotistical, it was essentially unselfish. Here we have the main-spring of his incessant activity.

From the beginning he was much more than Secretary of State. Either with or without formal approval he assumed scores of tasks that naturally belonged to other

¹ Judson's *Field*, 127.

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departments. To him, and often to Lincoln and to political leaders in the East, this seemed a matter of course. He acted as the President's agent in calling the meetings of the Cabinet and in looking after the performance of numerous acts that needed to be done quickly. In two sentences, one in a letter written in the spring of 1861, and the other a year later, he gives an almost perfect description of what he conceived to be his importance in the administration ["I am counseling with the Cabinet one hour, with the Army officers the next, the Navy next, and I visit all the troops as fast as they come." "I dare not, because I cannot safely, leave this post from which all supplies, all directions, all inquiries must radiate, to armies and navies at home and to legations abroad."] He was fond of mentioning to friends and callers how busy he was, and how many irons he had in the fire. His son quotes him as saying, occasionally: "I am sure I am the senior of some of my colleagues, but they seem to think I am the youngest member of the Cabinet. When there is some one to be seen, some place to be visited, or some journey to be made, they seem to think it easier for me to go than for anybody else." It was true; and Seward was not the one to conceal the fact.

At first no one of Seward's colleagues stood so close to him as Simon Cameron. It was not supposed that Lincoln's first Secretary of War had any special fitness for the duties that were severe enough to employ the energies of ten able men. Yet during most of the time the cause of the Union depended upon the enterprise, expedition, and spirit of the War Department. Seward's subtle influence with Scott, the military head of the army for several months after the war began, made it easy for him to keep abreast of the leading

¹ 2 Seward, 596; 3 Seward, 72.

² 2 Seward, 622.



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plans in that department. After the call to arms he was most ready and resourceful in suggesting how the troops and munitions of war, especially from New York, should be hurried forward; in fact, he seems to have helped the military organization whenever he had an opportunity. The man that had led so many political campaigns knew the importance of popular enthusiasm. It early became Seward's favorite recreation to drive to the neighboring fortifications and camps, in which he always found old friends and gave encouragement to the soldiers. More than once he visited the armies in the field. He was happiest when he appeared with the President, either on such occasions or when reviewing troops passing through Washington. This occurred so often that Seward's enemies began to ask sarcastically whether he was head of the army or only general manager of the whole administration.

It was one of the best phases of his activity that it was never merely meddling; he did not bewail the mistakes of others; he let the past go, and was eager—too eager, perhaps—to influence the present and the future. But he had the virtue to meet every military reverse with equanimity, and to be willing to give his whole time and energy to help reorganize and strengthen the shattered forces. The evidence of an impartial English traveler¹ is not necessary to convince us that, after the fall of Fort Sumter, Seward was among the first to recognize that the North was in earnest, and needed the most vigorous measures, and that that was why Lincoln showed so much confidence in him at critical times.

The numerous battles in different parts of Virginia since the beginning of the spring campaign of 1862 had sadly depleted the Federal forces. In June, several days

¹ 1 Dicey's *Federal States*, 229.

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before McClellan's campaign in the Peninsula had ended, Seward suggested that new enlistments be called for ere the people should realize the extent of the disasters. The plan was heartily approved by Lincoln and Edwin M. Stanton, who, in January, 1862, had succeeded Cameron. Seward first induced several of the New York Representatives to go home and arouse their constituents; then he went to New York city to confer with the Union Defence Committees and to communicate by telegraph with the governors of the loyal states. It is known, moreover, that he caused a great Union meeting to be called in Springfield, Massachusetts;¹ and it is probable that he made many similar suggestions as to other localities.

The President feared to issue a proclamation lest it might create a panic; but how, otherwise, could a hundred thousand new soldiers be obtained? Seward was a master of political strategy, and Lincoln was no novice. Here is the device; it was chiefly Seward's.² Lincoln gave Seward a confidential letter to be shown for effect; it explained the danger of the situation by saying that the Confederates had concentrated so many of their troops about Richmond that it would be easy for them to attack Washington, unless the Federal army in the East should be strengthened. It had been expected that this would suffice to induce the governors to send forward reinforcements. But Seward found that recruiting had ceased and that a direct official appeal to the governors would be necessary. So he drafted a circular, incorporating the suggestions of the confidential letter and call-

¹ "Upon your suggestion the other day," George Ashmun wrote to the Secretary, July 6, 1862, "I set on foot a call for a public meeting on the 4th, which was most successfully and happily responded to. It was the largest political meeting ever held under a roof in this region, and the manifestation was most gratifying."—Seward MSS.

² Seward, 100-110, gives a full account, with the documents.

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ing for one hundred and fifty thousand men, and telegraphed it to Washington for the President's approval. A little later he concluded that it would be better if the governors, instead of the President, appeared to take the initiative; and immediately he drew up a petition, to be signed by the loyal governors, expressing a "hearty desire that the recent successes [!] of the Federal army may be followed up by measures which must insure the speedy restoration of the Union," and requesting, "if it meets your [Lincoln's] entire approval," that the President should call upon the states for such additional numbers of men as might be "necessary to garrison and hold all of the numerous cities and military positions that have been captured by our armies, and to speedily crush the rebellion." This and the prepared reply, complying with the request, were also telegraphed to the President, and were promptly approved. By Seward's urgent request Stanton agreed to go beyond his lawful authority and advance to each recruit one-fourth of the one-hundred-dollar bounty, so as to encourage enlistments. In less than a week from the time Seward took up the task, he had obtained the support of all the governors of the loyal states, with one or two exceptions; three hundred thousand men—instead of half or one-third of that number, as was originally intended—had been called for, and the correspondence was published in the newspapers July 2d,¹ before the country knew just what McClellan's fate had been. The alarm and anger of the North were great, but the prospects of having large reinforcements saved the administration from serious embarrassments. It is doubtful if any one except Seward could have accomplished this remarkable feat so speedily and so successfully.

In time of war much of the general policy and many

¹ 6 Nicolay and Hay, 118.

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of the special undertakings of the Navy Department touch the interests of other nations, and therefore the Secretary of State is likely to be called upon to explain them or to cause any objectionable features to be changed. Gideon Welles and Seward were men of very different antecedents, associations, and tendencies. Welles had been a Jacksonian Democrat and a journalist—a man of little experience in public life outside of Connecticut and of not much within that state. He belonged to the New England school of anti-Seward Republicans, most of whom had left the Democracy on account of slavery. His integrity and intentions were of the best, but his ability was mediocre. He had but slight knowledge of naval affairs, and even less of international relations. From the beginning of the administration to the end of the war the chiefs of the two departments were generally on opposite sides if there was a division in the Cabinet. Welles favored closing the ports; Seward preferred a blockade, and had his way. Welles waved the Mason-and-Slidell firebrand; Seward threw it overboard, but none too soon. The Secretary of the Navy naturally wanted to attack as soon as possible, so as to weaken the enemy; the Secretary of State naturally deprecated acts likely to injure the rights or call forth the displeasure of foreign governments. As has been noticed, Seward often took it for granted that what was important and needed to be done quickly must be directed by himself. Excepting the Fort Sumter and the Fort Pickens expeditions, the departmental discourtesies of which Welles complained seem to have had some relation to the duties of the Secretary of State, and they resulted in nothing very serious; however, this may have been due principally to Welles's protests and to Lincoln's increased care in examining Seward's proposals relating to the Navy Department. The ground for just criticism was not Seward's motives but

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his methods. He usually chose the way that would most likely be free from obstacles to the accomplishment of his purposes, and surest to create ill-feeling and disorder in administration. His intentions, except possibly in regard to Fort Sumter, were thoroughly patriotic; but it was too much to expect the Secretary of the Navy and his friends to accept that as an excuse.¹

In giving clearances to vessels and in regard to some other functions of the Treasury Department that affected foreign relations, Chase appears to have accepted the suggestions of the Secretary of State. Chase's prominence and his militant anti-Seward followers were a warning against encroachments. In the Department of Justice there was much less danger. The following unpublished letter from the Attorney-General to the Secretary of State explains itself:

"ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S OFFICE, September 23, 1861.

"Hon. Wm. H. Seward, Secretary of State:

"SIR,—I regret to find in the newspapers a document bearing date September 21, '61, purporting to be a circular letter of instructions from you to the marshals and district attorneys of the United States, as to the manner of discharging their respective duties under recent acts of Congress.

"I apprehend that there must be some mistake in this matter; for, if not, there is danger that great inconvenience may result both to the officers instructed and to the public service. The officers may be embarrassed by discrepant instructions from different sources, and the service may suffer from lack of regularity and uniformity in the action of the officers.

"I beg to draw your attention to the act of Congress of August 2, 1861, whereby it is declared 'that the Attorney-General of the United States be, and he is hereby, charged with the general superintendence and direction of the

¹ The relations between the two Secretaries are described in Welles's *Lincoln and Seward*, *passim*.

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attorneys and the marshals of all the districts in the United States and Territories, and as to the manner of discharging their respective duties.'

"I have the honor to be, with the greatest respect,

"Your obedient servant,

"EDWARD BATES."¹

Seward's manner of filling the offices that came within the field of his political influence did not tend to make the party more harmonious. Lincoln early advised Weed and Seward that fairness to all was to be the rule of his administration in distributing the spoils. The President himself gave so much time to hearing applicants, especially from the West, that several of the eastern leaders became very indignant. Lincoln seems to have treated Seward with much consideration.² To agree upon men for numerous positions in New York, Seward invited the President and Senators Harris and Preston King to a consultation at the Department of State. Lincoln brought the Secretary of the Navy. Welles's account of the meeting represents Seward as desiring to proceed in a very summary manner, and to send to the Senate the names of persons that were to be subordinates of other Secretaries, without consulting those Secretaries. Lincoln vetoed this part of the programme.³

¹ Seward MSS. No trace of any reply or explanation on Seward's part has been found.

² 2 Lincoln's *Works*, 24, 43. Mrs. Lincoln wrote to the Secretary. March 22, 1861, requesting that the consulship at Honolulu be given to a certain person.—Seward MSS.

³ Welles, 71-73. The following letter from Chase to Seward is very much to the point, and probably refers to the conference mentioned above:

"TREASURY DEPARTMENT, *March 27, 1861.*

"MY DEAR SIR,—The appraisership at New York is vacant. Which of the applicants do you prefer?

"Day before yesterday you said to me in reference to the marshalship of the western district of New York, 'Insist on your brother.' I replied that the Attorney-General would, as I understood, nominate



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Of course the Post Office Department was the great field for the struggle of spoils. Although a conservative on many questions, Blair's political interests generally caused him to take sides with Chase. He frequently complained that Seward had too much to say about appointments in his department.¹

The rivalry between the two Republican factions in New York was so bitter and constant that Lincoln jested about it. Christopher Adams was a candidate for the office of superintending architect of the Treasury. "Mr. Adams is magnificently recommended," the President wrote to Chase; "but the great point in his favor is that Thurlow Weed and Horace Greeley join in recommending him. I suppose the like never happened before, and never will again; so it is now or never."²

Although Lincoln knew Seward's failings, he had a high regard for him both as a man and as a public officer. From the day the President-elect offered to the great New York Senator the highest office in his administration, until the well-seasoned President came, in April, 1865, to tell the Secretary of State of a trip to the late capital of the Confederacy, a close association and mutual confidence, which did great credit to each, existed between them. More than once Seward sub-

him, and that Senator Harris favored the appointment, as did Representatives Van Horn and Fenton, and that I presumed the other Representatives from western New York would not object, and that I supposed therefore that the nomination would certainly be made.

"To my surprise this morning I learn that another gentleman was brought forward by Mr. King in the conference in your department last night.

"I have never favored nor pressed my brother, and never spoke a word in his behalf to the Attorney-General, and never mentioned him until this morning to the President; but I cannot abandon him or consent that the decision of the Attorney-General in his favor shall be rescinded."—Seward MSS.

¹ Statement of John A. Kasson, First Assistant Postmaster-General, 1861-62, to the writer.

² 2 *Lincoln's Works*, 44.

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mitted patiently to severe reverses in his plans, and continued thoroughly loyal toward his official superior, which was evidence of good intentions as well as of good judgment. The President was the only member of the administration whom Seward praised often. And Lincoln never felt himself so worthily President as when he incorporated Seward's best thoughts with his own. Although Seward and Lincoln were men of very dissimilar temperaments, intellectual qualities, and methods, they were thoroughly congenial. There was no other department-chief at all comparable with Seward as a companion; he was full of resources, and always cheerful and vivacious, both in council and in society. Because he was so energetic, ready, and hopeful, his influence with the President was undoubtedly greater than that of any other Cabinet officer.

Lincoln could always understand and generally restrain the inharmonious elements in the administration, but it was almost impossible to do either with the warring factions outside. The old party lines were very indistinct in 1861 and 1862. The great question was not whether the Union should be saved, but how to save it. The radicals, led by such men as Chase, Greeley, Sumner, and Thaddeus Stevens, thought that a ruthless and universal emancipation policy would be a panacea for all the dangers and woes. Their right wing was composed of abolition zealots, most of whom had the brains of Jacobins and the hearts of gentle philanthropists. As they acted upon an interpretation of Seward's "higher law" that he himself refrained from adopting, they either were ready to ignore the Constitution or could easily convince themselves of the constitutionality of any plan they thought important. The conservatives that were sincere Unionists in all circumstances looked to Seward as their great exponent. As has been noticed, he was confident that the war could



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surely and constitutionally be brought to a successful end only by treating slavery as a secondary or incidental issue. The left wing of the conservatives was made up of men that were as reckless and as illogical as the abolitionists, and much less respectable.

The lines of this division became more sharply defined as the months passed. The people, as well as the politicians, demand a hero for every victory and a scapegoat for every defeat. It was especially so during these years of revolution, when passion seemed to blaze and consume like a conflagration. Lincoln leaned to the conservative side, but he was non-partisan in most of his acts. And it is surprising to find how often he was excepted from the sweeping denunciations hurled at the Cabinet and the military leaders. Of course there were always violent orators and furious editors who made no distinctions; nor would they, if the archangel Gabriel had come, as a Unionist and constitutionalist, to explain the mysteries of the conflict and to bring it to the best termination. The two factions not only had distinct theories and ideas, but they also chose military leaders and painted military cowards and military "butchers." The radicals cried, "On to Richmond!" when the way was almost as unknown as the troops were undrilled; and they applauded Frémont's absurd antislavery proclamation. The conservatives called them crazy abolitionists, incapable of statesmanlike action. Frémont suddenly became a favorite with the radicals, while McClellan slowly but surely lost the confidence of all except the conservatives.

Because Seward was so conspicuous and influential, he was blamed for many of the failures of 1861—and there were not many Federal successes to be ascribed to any one. When the radical press and popular orators asked how many years it would take to bring to an end Seward's "ninety-day war," the angry conservatives replied

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that at the time this opinion was expressed it was assumed that the other departments would be conducted as ably as the Department of State, and not mismanaged by zealots. Such was the first froth of revolution. There were frequent rumors of changes in the Cabinet. After the settlement of the *Trent* affair Seward's fortunes rose with amazing suddenness; and the heavy pendulum of vituperation swung to the other side. Nearly every one admitted that the credit of averting war belonged chiefly to Seward, and his special friends called the radicals to mark the result in matters over which he had actual control. Behold the difference, they said, between victories in diplomacy and defeats in the field. This ought to have sufficed, but it did not. They demanded that Seward should be given as great influence in the administration as the radicals had accused him of exerting, for the conservatives believed that his abilities and the state of public affairs warranted it. Even the great and well-balanced lawyer, William M. Evarts, wrote to the Secretary of State, January 2, 1862:

"Your position seemed to me not less difficult than imposing. A chafing people, a Congress filled with malcontents and empty of leaders, a Cabinet with disturbed plans and purposes, and long-accustomed freedom from any sharply critical situations in our foreign affairs, were hard to handle at home. . . .

"I hope you will feel strong enough to attempt what I am sure your friends feel as important to the completeness of your fame in the history of the 'Great Rebellion' some Clarendon is to write, as to the dearest interests of the country—the formation of a public-spirited Cabinet, framed to the issues that have come in *since* the election. The whole country is longing for this."¹

A few weeks later the same friend wrote again: "There is a general expectation here that Secretary Welles

¹ Seward MSS.

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will leave the Cabinet, and that his place will be filled from New England"; and then he suggested that Richard Henry Dana, of Boston, be appointed, for "his general public ability, high character, and intrepid courage would make him a most valuable colleague to yourself in the Cabinet."¹ It was a repetition of a frequent oversight: men forgot that Lincoln, not Seward nor Chase, was President. Cameron alone went out, in January, 1862, and that was because he was enveloped in a cloud of corruption.

Seward's aversion to a strictly antislavery policy was continually a pretext for attacks. The radicals recalled his words in the winter of 1860-61; and when the volume of diplomatic correspondence for 1861 was published, near the end of that year, they found the despatches to Dayton and to Adams saying that no moral principles were to be brought into discussion before foreign governments, and that the condition of slavery would remain just the same whether the revolution should succeed or fail.² From the same store-house they took his declaration that "Only an imperial or despotic government could subjugate thoroughly disaffected and insurrectionary members of the state." And all were used as cutting weapons. This was the man, they said, whose friends asserted that he was the virtual head of the administration; and, they added, if the claim was warranted it explained why no moral questions had come into the conflict, and why there had been so little subjugation of the disaffected. It was a specious but potent method of damaging an inconsistent yet zealous patriot. Notwithstanding the spring-flood of antislavery activity that began in the winter of 1861-62, Lincoln, as has been seen, could be induced to go only a little beyond what

¹ February 8, 1862. Seward MSS.

² See *ante*, pp. 162, 357. An editorial article in the *New York Tribune* of December 13, 1861, criticised Seward for this.

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was known to be Seward's opinions at that time. Therefore, the emancipationists vented their anger upon the Secretary of State, and endeavored to make him shoulder the responsibility for every reverse in the field.

Seward's offences were much less serious than they were represented to be. What he had said about coercion was written even before the attempt to relieve Fort Sumter, which was avowedly not an effort to subjugate South Carolina, but merely a military declaration of a right to supply and hold that particular fort. Although the prophecy about slavery was made a few days later, it was written three months before Congress passed the Crittenden resolution, which contained Seward's idea, and was an official announcement of the national policy. He undoubtedly did believe that the contest itself would not immediately destroy slavery, for, like a great many others, he fully expected that the next campaign would see the beginning of the end of hostilities, if not the end itself. If Confederate disintegration had dated from the early spring of 1862, it would then, considering all the circumstances, have been entirely unnecessary and unstatesmanlike, if not positively injurious, to attack slavery directly.

As soon as McClellan's reverses before Richmond began, the severe criticisms on Seward increased in number and virulence, and efforts were made "to sow the seeds of disunion" in the relations between the Secretary of State and his colleagues.¹ His services in the North in connection with the call for troops did not appease his enemies. In July it was said that he was to leave the Cabinet.² When it was seen that he could not be displaced by means of disconnected attacks, his en-

¹ 3 Seward, 98.

² Robert D. Pine wrote, July 25, 1862: "I sincerely hope that there is no foundation for the reported rumor here of your resigning your station at the helm."—Seward MSS.

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emies began to organize. Early in September a committee from New York, claiming to represent hostile sentiment in that state, and especially the opinions of the five New England governors, came to Washington to "insist on the resignation of Messrs. S[eward] and B[lair?]." In the same paragraph in which Chase recorded this fact he said that he

"had never known Mr. Seward to object to any *action*, however vigorous, of a military nature, though his influence had been cast in favor of harmonizing the various elements of support to the administration, by retaining General McClellan in command, and by avoiding action which would be likely to alienate the border states. I added that in his wishes of harmony I concurred; and that I credited him with good motives in the choice of means to ends, though I could not always concur with him in judgment as to their adaptation."¹

The presumption and personal motives of the committee provoked Lincoln to say: "It is plain enough what you want—you want to get Seward out of the Cabinet. There is not one of you who would not see the country ruined if you could turn out Seward."² Bryant wrote to a friend, September 15th: "Some of our best and most eminent men have visited Washington to remonstrate with him [Lincoln, about his inactivity in military and antislavery matters], but with only partial effect. The influence of Seward is always at work, and counteracts the good impressions made in the interviews with men of a different class."³ It was probably within a few weeks of this time that Joseph Medill said in an undated letter to Schuyler Colfax:

"McClellan in the field and Seward in the Cabinet have been the evil spirits that have brought our grand cause to the very brink of death. Seward must be got out of the Cabinet. He is Lincoln's evil genius. He has been Presi-

¹ Warden's *Chase*, 467.

² Warden's *Chase*, 468.

³ 2 Godwin's *Bryant*, 178.

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dent *de facto*, and has kept a sponge saturated with chloroform to Uncle Abe's nose all the while, except one or two brief spells." . . .¹

So much for the opposition to Seward in the summer and autumn of 1862.

It should not be inferred that the conservatives had no reproaches for their enemies. It was Seward's misfortune rather than his fault that many Democrats and Democratic newspapers that had formerly been counted as pro-southern had come to be his staunch allies, and he was too often blamed for their opinions. The New York *Herald* belonged to this class, and, of course, violently assailed the radicals, just as in former years it had assailed Seward himself. On July 9, 1862, it called for "the removal of the imbeciles from the Navy and War Departments"; and, about this time, it very frequently spoke of the "abolition traitors." On November 28th it alleged that the movement against Seward was led by Wendell Phillips, who had called for a radical change of men and measures; that the preliminary proclamation of emancipation was the beginning of the change in measures; and that the dismissal of McClellan was the first step in a movement to get rid of Seward, Bates, and Blair. It expressed the opinion that Seward was "the only member of the Cabinet who has done his work thoroughly, efficiently, and successfully." On December 18th it declared that the *Tribune* and the radicals were responsible for the result at Fredericksburg. The New York *Times*, too, called for a new Cabinet, ready to adopt a policy of energy, of stronger, broader, and more persevering statesmanship, instead of what was regarded as unsteady and shifting.² Everybody understood this as equivalent to a demand that Seward's ideas should be given supremacy.

¹ Hollister's *Colfax*, 200.

² *Times*, September 15, 1862.



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The success of the Democrats in the election of 1862 and the Federal defeat at Fredericksburg were charged against Seward by the radicals; but there was no ground for their accusations. When the *Diplomatic Correspondence* for 1862 appeared, near the end of that year, they found a despatch that well suited their purposes. It was written July 5th, in the midst of the political excitement resulting from the disasters of the campaign in the Peninsula. Its principal sentence was:

“It seems as if the extreme advocates of African slavery and its most vehement opponents were acting in concert together to precipitate a servile war—the former by making the most desperate attempts to overthrow the Federal Union, the latter by demanding an edict of universal emancipation as a lawful and necessary, if not, as they say, the only legitimate, way of saving the Union.”¹

It was as indiscreet as it was useless to put such a sentence into the official records, and nothing less than an accident would seem to account for its publication.² Charles Sumner, who was chairman of the Senate committee on foreign affairs and had been one of Seward's severest critics in diplomacy and on the question of slavery, learned from the President that the despatch had never been submitted to him for approval. There was nothing strange about this, for the despatch was merely an expression of an opinion in no way designed to affect foreign relations; but it was regarded as a rare opportunity to create a disagreement between the President and the Secretary of State.

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 124.

² The biographers of Lincoln and of Sumner (6 Nicolay and Hay, 264; 4 Pierce, 110) thought it strange that Seward should have such ideas so short a time before the President made known his intention about emancipation. They overlooked the fact that Seward was speaking of *universal* emancipation, which was no part of Lincoln's programme, as was made very evident in his letter of August 22d to Greeley.

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About the middle of December a caucus of Republican Senators passed a resolution asking the President to dismiss Seward. Later, this was changed into a request for a reconstruction of the Cabinet, but it was well understood that the Secretary of State was the target.¹ Nine Senators—Grimes, Sumner, Trumbull, Pomeroy, Fessenden, Collamer, Harris, Howard, and Wade—were appointed as a committee to wait on Lincoln. Senator Preston King alone dissented,² and, refusing to be bound to secrecy by the caucus, he hurried off to inform Seward. Wishing to anticipate the action of the committee, and to relieve Lincoln of embarrassment, Seward immediately wrote his resignation, and King carried it to the White House. The next day the committee called on the President and formally attacked Seward. Except in relation to slavery, they seem not to have questioned his conduct of affairs in the Department of State. Lincoln described their criticism in this homely figure of speech: "While they seemed to believe in my honesty, they also appeared to think that when I had in me any good purpose or intention Seward contrived to suck it out of me unperceived."³ No conclusion was then reached, except that the conference should be continued that evening. Lincoln soon talked matters over with the Cabinet, showing no signs of yielding to the strange demand, and he finally instructed all except Seward to meet him that evening.

When the time arrived for continuing the conferences, the committee and the Cabinet were surprised by being brought together. Then the President opened the discussion by reading the resolution and commenting upon some of the points with "gentle severity," as his biographers describe it. Of course, the Senators had to take

¹ 6 Nicolay and Hay, 264.

² Schuckers's *Chase*, 474 ; Welles, 88.

³ 6 Nicolay and Hay, 265.



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the aggressive; whereas Lincoln's attitude and the nature of the case compelled the Cabinet to act on the defensive. No Secretary could properly side with the Senators on such an issue; Stanton's simile explained the reason: "This Cabinet, gentlemen, is like yonder window. Suppose you allow it to be understood that passers-by might knock out one pane of glass—just one at a time—how long do you think any panes would be left in it?"¹ Chase's position was exceptional, and he was greatly embarrassed. He dared not then criticise Seward, as it was notorious he had done at other times. Yet to defend him would have been a very patent stultification. It was so evident he was caught in a trap that he expressed his regrets that he had not stayed away.² Before the long meeting broke up Lincoln had once more proved his superior shrewdness. All the members of the Senate committee had wished to have Seward expelled; but when they were asked: "Do you, gentlemen, still think Seward ought to be excused?" only four of the eight Senators present answered in the affirmative. Three were non-committal, and one had completely reversed his position. The Senators had met with a repulse, but the contest had not ended.³

¹ 3 Seward, 147.

² 6 Nicolay and Hay, 266, 267.

³ Seward and his son withdrew from the Department of State on the day following the resignation. The *New York Times* of December 21st said, in a leading editorial article, that the metropolis had been as much startled on the 20th as it was a few days earlier by the defeat of Burnside. As yet the *Times* did not comprehend the situation. "Mr. Seward has been the right-hand man of the President from the day of his election until now," the same article declared. "He has had in a great measure the shaping of the policy of the government, besides the management of what has been, on several occasions, its most important and difficult department. . . . Other departments are filled with men who have no reputation, no administrative ability, no public respect—who are at the same time imbecile and headstrong, who have driven the government to the verge of ruin, and who would long ago have vacated their posts had they had the least regard

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On the morning of December 20th, when Lincoln and most of the Cabinet met again for further consultation, Chase orally offered his resignation, but continued to hold the written communication in his hand. "The President stepped forward and took it with an alacrity that surprised, and it must be said disappointed, Mr. Chase."¹ From that moment the way was clear, for Lincoln had the leader of each faction at his mercy. "Yes, Judge," said the President to a caller shortly afterward, "I can ride on now, I've got a pumpkin in each end of my bag."² If either faction should become too bold, it could be humbled by accepting the resignation of its chief and by refusing to permit that of the other. But Chase was recognized as a great Secretary of the Treasury; and Lincoln had too keen a sense both of humor and of justice to allow an efficient officer to receive very severe punishment even for extreme folly. Seward was certainly not less efficient. If the President had released either Seward or both Seward and Chase, it would also have been interpreted to mean that the Senate had the right, or at least the power, to get rid of any Secretary whom it disliked. This would, indeed, have been very hazardous for the administration; for it would have encouraged the discontent shown in the recent elections and strengthened by Burnside's failure. Moreover, France was eager for an excuse to intervene; and

for the opinion, the sentiment, or the welfare of the country. If they will not resign, they should be expelled before the country is swept over the brink of despair on which it is now trembling."

By the next day the *Times* had learned the particulars of the crisis, and therefore it expressed a very different opinion: "Mr. Seward is supposed to have been the leading man in the administration—to have suggested policies and caused their adoption, to have held back the President from measures which he desired to adopt, and to have forced upon him action he did not wish to perform. We believe that all this is without the slightest foundation in fact."

¹ 6 Nicolay and Hay, 268.

² 3 Seward, 148.

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the British government could hardly have resisted the popular demand that would have been made for the recognition of the Confederacy, if Lincoln's Cabinet had gone to pieces under such influences. Fortunately, Lincoln did not forget that the best way to control men and events is to keep control of them. With Chase and Seward outside the Cabinet, their respective followers were sure to be less friendly to the President. While Chase and Seward remained in the Cabinet, neither they nor their friends were likely to attack Lincoln, openly and directly. So, on the 20th, the President wrote a joint note to these Secretaries, saying that "after most anxious consideration," his "deliberate judgment" was that the public interest would not permit him to accept their resignations; and he requested them to resume the duties of their departments.

In a single sentence of fourteen words Seward answered the next morning, that he had "cheerfully resumed the functions" of Secretary of State. Chase was still seriously embarrassed. He would have preferred not to re-enter the Cabinet if Seward had insisted on withdrawing; but Seward again at the Department of State, while he himself remained out of office, was not a pleasing prospect. Finally, on the 22d, he wrote to the President expressing a willingness "to conform my action to your judgment and wishes."¹ The New York *Herald* of the 23d called Chase the Mephistopheles of the Cabinet, and charged that he had "been the prime mover in all the radical schemes and an active co-worker with his confederates of the Senate against Mr. Seward." This was too severe; but Chase's actions both before and during the Cabinet crisis are unintelligible except on the assumption that his dislike or jealousy of Seward's influence was a very important factor in what took place.


¹ Warden, 509.

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The real Cabinet crisis ended before Christmas, 1862, but the newspapers and the politicians continued to wrangle for months. Still smarting from Seward's cutting but imprudent declaration that "the extreme advocates of African slavery and its most vehement opponents were acting in concert," Greeley affected great indignation and charged Seward with sending despatches without submitting them to the President for approval. The intended implication was that the Secretary was too presumptuous and headstrong to be tolerated by the administration. Raymond, as usual, replied for his friend. The *Times* declared that not one despatch, "not merely and exclusively formal and technical in its character," had been sent to any foreign Minister without the approval of the President, and that this statement was made on the authority and by the permission of the President and of the Secretary of State. This was a flank attack that Greeley had not anticipated, and it showed that he had undertaken a most gratuitous task. The *Tribune* maintained that the exception was so broad that it was practically a confession. Greeley was strong in a single charge, but his enemies were more resourceful. It came out as Raymond expected when he wrote, February 27, 1863: "I think before the matter is ended I shall put Mr. Greeley into an awkward position."¹

For a man that was usually so adroit and circumspect, Seward had a strange faculty for getting himself into annoying complications, and the extrications were not always satisfactory. Like a lion-tamer or snake-charmer, he seemed to think at times that he could safely perform what others could do only with the greatest risk. His share in the responsibility for the trip that Mercier, the French Minister, made to Richmond, in the

¹ Seward MSS. The discussion between the *Tribune* and the *Times* continued almost daily for two weeks after about February 20, 1863.



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spring of 1862, illustrated this trait. The particulars of the incident did not become known until early in 1863. When Mercier expressed to Seward a regret that he did not know more about the condition of affairs in Richmond, the Secretary obtained the President's permission for him to visit that capital, as has been mentioned. Seward was sure that the "insurrection" was "shrinking and shriveling into very narrow dimensions," and he hoped that Mercier might "come back prepared with some plan to alleviate the inconveniences of his countrymen in the South, who were not acting against this government."¹ Before Mercier started Seward remarked that he would be pleased to find himself again in the Senate with those whom the South might see fit to send thither, and that the North was animated by no sentiment of vengeance. Mercier's subsequent account made it plain that Seward spoke unofficially,² but what the Frenchman said in Richmond led to very different inferences. To the Confederate Secretary of State he expressed the belief that the United States would in time get possession of all the southern ports; but Benjamin thought he convinced Mercier that in any case there was no doubt of the ultimate independence of the Confederacy. Mercier said that it would be a matter of infinite gratification to himself and his government if his good offices could be interposed in any way to restore peace, and he suggested political independence combined with commercial union. But, he remarked, with regret, one side would not hear a sentence that did not begin with "independence," while the other insisted that not a syllable should be spoken except on the basis of "Union."³ At this time Seward wrote to Weed: "Mercier's visit to Richmond was on con-

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 335.

² *New York Tribune*, February 5, 1863, printed Mercier's despatch describing how the trip originated, etc.

³ Benjamin to Slidell, July 12, 1863.

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sultation with me, and it will produce fruits, I hope.”¹ In a letter of June 25, 1862, to Bigelow, he spoke of “our consenting to Mr. Mercier’s going to Richmond” as being meaningless.²

The *Tribune*, of course, led the attack, and represented that Seward was using the French Minister to invite Confederates to return to their seats in the Senate.³ This led Senator Grimes to introduce a resolution requesting the President to communicate the character of the suggestions that the French Minister was authorized to make from the government, or from the Secretary of State, to the Confederate authorities.⁴ Seward replied that “since March 4, 1861, no communication, direct or indirect, formal or informal, save in relation to prisoners of war, has been held by this government, or by the Secretary of State, with the insurgents, their aiders, or abettors; no passport has been granted to any foreign Minister to pass the military lines, except by the President’s direction.”⁵ Of course the sweeping declaration about not holding any communication, direct or indirect, with insurgents left out of view what had taken place between Seward and Gwin, Hunter, and Campbell in March and April, 1861. Seward wrote to Dayton, March 16, 1863:

“Nothing was ever more preposterous than the idea engendered here, and sent abroad to perplex Europe, that an American Secretary of State would employ a plenipotentiary of the Emperor of France to negotiate with American insurgents, and that a plenipotentiary of such a power would accept such a mission.”⁶

This was a good reply to the false charges, but it did not show that what he had actually done was either necessary or wise.

¹ 3 Seward, 88.

² New York *Tribune*, February 4, 1863.

³ 6 Moore’s *Rebellion Record*, Diary, p. 45.

⁴ Bigelow MSS.

⁵ *Globe*, 1862–63, 817.

⁶ 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 149.



MISCELLANEOUS ACTIVITIES AND TRIALS

Seward had more bitter and active enemies among the politicians than any other member of the Cabinet; yet, excepting Welles, he was the only Secretary that served throughout the administrations of Lincoln and of Johnson. There was always a strong element of pugnacity, personal hatred, or ambition in the disagreements that Chase and Blair, respectively, had with various men and factions. Therefore, Lincoln did not find it practicable to retain either of them to the end of his first term. Seward had a positive dislike for a quarrel of any sort; and, finding himself involved in one, he always tried to extricate himself in some diplomatic way. He had his failings; but his great intelligence, his affable manners, his earnest desire to serve his country, and the great value of the work he did, made it easy to overlook his mistakes and to feel that he was indispensable to the administration in the crisis.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE BRINK OF A FOREIGN WAR: BLOCKADE-RUNNING AND BUILDING CONFEDERATE WAR-SHIPS

THE Confederates did not expect to prevent a blockade, but they counted on blockade-running as a sufficient means of communication with the outside world until some foreign nation should come to their assistance. They were also confident that by sending out privateers and improvised cruisers they could destroy the commerce of the United States. And if war-ships could be obtained abroad, they alone might be able to break the blockade. Foreign capital and enterprise were soon attracted to the contraband trade with the Confederacy. It was not long before the two great powers that were complaining of the blockade, but dared not disregard it, were building different kinds of war-ships with which the Confederates hoped to sweep United States merchantmen from the seas, and to open southern ports. The serious international questions that arose in consequence brought the United States to the brink of a foreign war.

It was impossible to watch strictly all of the three thousand miles of Confederate coast-line with its one hundred and eighty-five harbor openings. At many points there were, especially in the beginning, no serious obstacles to blockade-running. Wilmington, Charleston, and Savannah, on the Atlantic, and Galveston and Brownsville on the Gulf, were the principal ports. Charleston harbor was the one most frequently entered at first, although

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care was taken at an early period in the war to blockade it effectively. The numerous inlets to Wilmington made it impossible to shut off much of its commerce until the third year of the war, when the Federal government was able to stretch a long line of ships in front of the entrances.¹ As many as forty-two vessels entered and cleared at Wilmington in the summer of 1861, and one hundred and fifty arrived at Charleston in the six months prior to December of that year.² But the size, quantities, and qualities of the cargoes of all blockade-runners at different points were not such as either to disprove the efficiency of the blockade or to supply the needs of the Confederacy.

As the blockade grew in efficiency the value of articles imported into the Confederacy rose, while that of cotton and tobacco rapidly declined. Because the possibilities of greater profit, in case of a successful voyage, about balanced the increased risks, the contraband trade did not become less tempting. At first all sorts of sailing vessels and steamboats were used; but when the Federal government increased the number of the blockaders, some of which could make good speed, only those blockade-runners with steam and of light draft, and built so as to attract little attention, were likely to escape capture.³

¹ 1 Wilson's *Ironclads in Action*, 186.

² Soley, 89.

³ "The typical blockade-runner of 1863-64 was a long, low side-wheel steamer of from four to six hundred tons, with a slight frame, sharp and narrow, its length perhaps nine times its beam. . . . The hull rose only a few feet out of the water, and was painted a dull gray or lead color, so that it could hardly be seen by daylight at two hundred yards."—Soley, 156. They could often steal past the blockaders without being noticed, and many of them were so swift that it was impossible to overtake them at sea. The *R. E. Lee*, which ran the blockade twenty-one times in ten months, showed what was possible. But the one thousand one hundred and forty-nine prizes, two hundred and ten of which were steamers, brought in during the war, and the three hundred and fifty-five vessels that were burned or destroyed (Soley, 44), told a more reliable story.

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Capital and a venturesome spirit early became prerequisites of success. The Confederates lacked capital, but many of them possessed daring and knowledge of the coast and of the conditions at home, which made them invaluable as captains and pilots. The tastes and resources of Englishmen could supply the rest; and the proximity of Bermuda and the Bahamas gave them special advantages. Large numbers of blockade-runners were built on the Clyde, and were soon busily engaged in this contraband trade. From Bermuda to Wilmington is but six hundred and seventy-four miles; to Charleston, seven hundred and seventy-two, and to Savannah, eight hundred and thirty-four. From Nassau the distance to the same cities is five hundred and seventy, five hundred and fifteen, and five hundred miles respectively.¹ Havana, Cuba, was the port most used by the blockade-runners in the Gulf of Mexico. It is five hundred and ninety miles from Mobile, and five hundred and seventy from New Orleans; but after the first few months of the war the blockade of the Gulf ports as far as the mouth of the Mississippi was generally very strict. Galveston was accessible most of the time, and Matamoras, Mexico, on the Rio Grande, and opposite Brownsville, Texas, could not be closed because it belonged to a neutral power, although it was practically a Confederate port. These foreign ports suddenly became great emporiums for cotton and for all sorts of merchandise intended for the Confederacy.

To a vessel sailing for a Confederate port the danger of capture was, as a general rule, proportionate to the distance to be traveled. *Bona-fide* commerce between neutral ports is, of course, not subject to interference. Hence merchants and speculators interested in running the blockade soon adopted the plan of pretending that

¹ Soley, p. 36, map.

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goods that were really for the Confederacy were to be shipped merely to Bermuda or Nassau or Matamoras; there they were temporarily unloaded, or were transferred to steamers specially built to run the blockade, and then what was often practically the same voyage was continued. The United States government could not afford to be outwitted by this subterfuge. Where there was reasonable suspicion of a design ultimately to send the cargo to a Confederate port, the ship was captured, taken before a prize court, and then, if the evidence showed a hostile destination and a guilty knowledge on the part of the ship-owner, both the ship and the cargo were condemned.¹ This was done on the theory that there was but one continuous voyage from the port of departure to that of ulterior destination. Transshipment made no difference, for the court held that "the ships are planks of the same bridge, all of the same kind, and all necessary to the convenient passage of persons and property from one end to the other."²

The ingenuity of the persons engaged in this commerce was still unexhausted. They sent goods from Europe to a United States port, thence to the Bermudas or Nassau or Matamoras for the purpose of transshipment. It was believed that the United States would find it impracticable to check commerce between their own and neutral ports. The presumption was correct for a short time. As soon as this peculiar trade developed such proportions as to attract attention, Congress passed a law empowering the Secretary of the Treasury to refuse a clearance to any vessel laden with merchandise that he had satisfactory reason to believe was intended, whatever its ostensible destination, for any insurgent port.³ It also authorized the collector of any port to re-

¹ Bernard, 306 ff.

² Quoted Bernard, 310.

³ *Dép. Cor.*, 1862, 300.

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quire a bond from the master or owner of any ship that the cargo would be delivered at the port for which it was cleared.

The diplomatic correspondence on these questions was almost wholly with Great Britain. Of course the views of Seward and of Russell disagreed, for each demanded what was most advantageous to his government.

In regard to the question of broken voyages, the British Secretary insisted that the intent to land merchandise at neutral ports protected it from seizure until it left that port. Seward's line of reasoning is shown in a communication he sent to Lord Lyons, May 12, 1862, about the trade with Matamoras :

"It is only very recently that this especially enlarged Matamoras trade has come to our notice. Suddenly and quickly as palaces, cities, states, and empires rise in the tales of the Arabian Nights under the waving of a wand or the utterance of a spell, that trade rose from a petty barter to a commerce that engaged the mercantile activity of Liverpool and London. Simultaneously roads across the interior of Texas were covered with caravans, the cotton of disloyal citizens in the insurrectionary region became, all at once, the property of the treasonable conspiracy against the Union, and it was hypothecated, by its agents, for a foreign loan to satisfy obligations contracted by them in the fitting out and equipping and clearing from British ports naval expeditions to destroy the commerce of the United States. The *Peterhoff* was about the first discovered of the vessels engaged in this expanded trade. Unusual arts and devices were alleged, with much probability, to have been used by her owners to secure for her immunity as a trader bound to Matamoras with a lawful cargo, when, in fact, she was designed not to reach, or even seek, that port at all, but to discharge her freight into rebel lighters, at the mouth of the Rio Grande, at the order of pretended consignees, who were her passengers, to be conveyed at once to the possession of the insurgents on American, not Mexican, soil. She was indicated, moreover, as a forerunner of other fraudulent craft of the same character, organized with regularity, so

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as to constitute a contraband packet-line. She was searched, and upon probable grounds was seized and sent into the nearest available port for adjudication."¹

This meant that the United States claimed the right to prevent trade between neutral ports whenever that trade appeared to be a device for getting goods into a blockaded port. The error lay in the fact that Seward was ready to assume, from mere probability, what international law required should be well substantiated by legal evidence.

The regulations to prevent the shipment of contraband merchandise of various kinds, especially coal, from the United States to neutral ports, where it might be sold or forwarded to the Confederates, opened a new line of discussion. Because these regulations were directed against the trade with the Bahamas and affected British interests almost solely, Russell alleged that they were an anti-British enactment, and were both an unfriendly act and a violation of commercial treaties.

"The false assumptions," he said, "which seem to pervade the views of the United States government with respect to Nassau are that it is a violation of neutrality for a British colony to carry on any active trade with the so-styled Confederate States during the existence of the blockade, and that, in aid of the inefficiency of the blockading force, an embargo may lawfully be placed on a particular trade of British commerce at New York."²

In Seward's formal reply to the British *chargé d'affaires* at Washington he regretted that, although it had been claimed that the action was in contravention of international law, the particular principles or maxims violated had not been named, and he continued:

"By the law of nations every state is sovereign over its own citizens and strangers residing within its limits, its

¹ 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 536.

² *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 305.

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own productions and fabrics, and its own ports and waters, and its highways, and, generally, within all its proper territories. It has a right to maintain that sovereignty against sedition and insurrection by civil preventives and penalties and armed force, and it has a right to interdict and prohibit, within its own boundaries, exportation of its productions and fabrics and the supplying of traitors, in arms against itself, with material and munitions, and any other form of aid or comfort. It has a right, within its own territories, to employ all the means necessary to make these prohibitions effective. . . . It [the law of Congress] does not confine its prohibitions or its requirements to British vessels trading between New York and the Bahamas, but applies them to all vessels of all nations, including the United States, wherever trading, whether with the Bahamas or with any other part of the world. . . . They involve no question of neutral rights, because no neutral has or can have a right more than any citizen of the United States to do an act within their exclusive jurisdiction which is prohibited by the statutes and laws of the country. The act has nothing to do with the blockade of the insurrectionary ports, because it confines its prohibitions and requirements to transactions occurring and to persons residing or being within the ports actually possessed by the United States, and under their undisputed protection and control."¹

The Secretary of State and the American Minister at London complained that subjects of Great Britain were the principal foreign supporters of the Confederate commerce, and that the British government should try to check the blockade-running.

"Information derived from our consul at Liverpool," Seward wrote to Adams, "confirms reports which have reached us that insurance companies in England are insuring vessels engaged in running our blockade, and even vessels carrying contraband of war. This is, in effect, a combination of British capitalists, under legal authority, to levy war against the United States. It is entirely inconsistent with the relations of friendship which we, on our part, maintain toward Great Britain; and we cannot believe

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 301, 302.

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that her Britannic Majesty's government will regard it as compatible with the attitude of neutrality proclaimed by that government. . . .

"Pray bring this subject to the notice of Earl Russell, and ask for intervention in some form which will be efficient."¹

Again, later, he expressed this opinion:

"The blockade amounts practically to a closing of all the insurgent ports except Wilmington, and the contraband trade there is now so exceedingly abridged that it seems unaccountable to us that Great Britain should not be ready to suppress it altogether, and accept in lieu the restoration of a free and prosperous commerce under the treaties and laws of the United States."²

Russell thought that "two things totally distinct" had been confounded:

"The foreign enlistment act is intended to prevent the subjects of the crown from going to war when the sovereign is not at war. Thus private persons are prohibited from fitting out a ship-of-war in our ports, or from enlisting in the service of a foreign state at war with another state, or in the service of insurgents against a foreign sovereign or state. In these cases the persons so acting would carry on war, and thus might engage the name of their sovereign and of their nation in belligerent operations. But owners and masters of merchant-ships carrying warlike stores do nothing of the kind. If captured for breaking a blockade or carrying contraband of war to the enemy of the captor, they submit to capture, are tried, and condemned to lose their cargo. This is the penalty which the law of nations has affixed to such an offence, and in calling upon her Majesty's government to prohibit such adventures you in effect call upon her Majesty's government to do that which it belongs to the cruisers and the courts of the United States to do for themselves.

"There can be only one plea for asking Great Britain thus to interpose. That plea is that the blockade is in reality ineffective, and that merchant-ships can enter with impunity the blockaded ports. But this is a plea which I presume you will not urge."³

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 46.

² *1 Dip. Cor.*, 1864, 201.

³ *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 93.

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Russell's reasoning was sound. Seward had claimed as a right more than could have been legally granted as a favor.

But no one of these incidents was deemed to be of sufficient importance to warrant more than a protest, for there were already too many serious questions.

As has been noticed, Jefferson Davis's reply to Lincoln's call for troops was a call for privateers; but privateering did not meet with the success expected, because the blockade made it impossible to get the prizes before a court for condemnation.

The first Confederate commerce-destroyer, the *Sumter*, was purchased at New Orleans in April, 1861. Raphael Semmes was made commander, and his instructions from the Secretary of the Navy were to go to sea and "do the enemy's commerce the greatest injury in the shortest time."¹ He ran the blockade at the mouth of the Mississippi, and, during the first week of July, 1861, captured eight merchantmen. Between that time and the beginning of the next year the *Sumter* cruised along the coast of South America, back through the West Indies, and then eastward to Spain. In all, she took seventeen or eighteen prizes,² caused much alarm and loss, and eluded or ran away from the many vessels sent in pursuit of her, until she was finally blockaded at Gibraltar, and sold in consequence.

The early work of the *Sumter* confirmed the Confederates in their belief in commerce-destroyers, but they realized that marked success would depend on the ability of their government to procure war-ships abroad, for there was no opportunity to construct them at home. Two naval officers specially qualified for making such

¹ Scharf, *The Confederate States Navy*, 787.

² Soley, 176; Scharf, 789.

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purchases were sent to Europe in the winter of 1861-62. Captain James D. Bulloch had the chief responsibility for this very important enterprise. But could such ships be obtained? International law forbids a neutral nation to supply vessels of war to belligerents; and Great Britain had a neutrality law that was supposed to be very stringent.

The *Florida* was the first of the ships bought in England. She was constructed in the autumn and winter of 1861-62, and it was pretended that she was for the Italian government; but, although it was notorious that she belonged to the Confederacy, the protests of the United States Minister were regarded as insufficient to warrant her detention. In March, 1862, she cleared from Liverpool for Palermo and Jamaica, and British subjects, as officers and crew, were engaged to take her to sea unarmed and to transfer her to a Confederate commander at Nassau. The equipments necessary to the destructive work planned for her were sent in another vessel. At Nassau the United States consul twice tried to have the *Oreto*, as the ship was still called, seized, on the ground that she was intended for the Confederacy; but the court released her, on account of a lack of evidence to show a violation of the neutrality law. In August she received her armament near an uninhabited island sixty miles from Nassau, and was regularly commissioned for the Confederate service. J. N. Maffitt, soon to be almost as famous as Semmes, became her commander. Not finding it practicable to equip and man the ship fully in Cuba, Maffitt very boldly ran her into Mobile through the blockade. In January, 1863, she steamed out past the blockading squadron and began her search for merchantmen. During the next fifteen months the *Florida* destroyed thirty-two vessels and bonded four others.¹

¹ Beaman's *Alabama Claims*, 68.

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Maffitt thoroughly carried out his instructions, which, he said, were brief and to the point, leaving much to discretion, but more to the torch.

But it was the *Alabama* that showed what a single ship could do in injuring commerce; and the alarm and anger that it created, first and last, several times brought Great Britain and the United States to the verge of war. On June 23, 1862, Adams informed Russell that a powerful war-steamer for the Confederate service was about completed and nearly ready for departure from Liverpool. The department of the government to which Russell referred the case reported that there was not sufficient ground to warrant the detention of the vessel or to interfere with it in any way. Evidence that the British government itself decided, July 29th, to be sufficient for these purposes was submitted July 22d, 23d, and 25th.¹ But before word was sent to Liverpool, the *290*, as the cruiser was called at first, had gone to sea without a clearance and on the pretence of making a trial trip. She stopped at Moelfra Bay, about forty miles distant, where she shipped some of her crew and materials. In a few days she reached the Azores. Here British vessels from British ports brought her armament, supplies, and officers. Semmes took command, enlisted a crew from the men that had come in the different ships, and hoisted the Confederate flag. The *Alabama* soon became a terror to American merchantmen. In a little more than a year and a half she destroyed about sixty vessels and property worth several million dollars.² She went first to the North Atlantic, where she captured and burned many whalers and grain-ships. Later she was in the West Indies and the Gulf of Mexico. In 1863 she cruised down the coast of Brazil, across to the Cape of Good Hope, through the Indian

¹ Bernard, 362-70.

² Scharf, 815, gives the particulars.
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Ocean and the Bay of Bengal, and proceeded as far east as the China Sea. Early in 1864 she returned to the Atlantic. Semmes was surprisingly successful: he frequently found and made ocean-torches of helpless ships of commerce, sailing under the United States flag, and he had usually departed before his pursuers could reach the scene of his latest reported devastations. But, finally, the *Alabama* gave battle to the *Kearsarge* in the British Channel, June 19, 1864, and was sunk.

Several other commerce-destroyers were purchased in British ports. The *Georgiana* got to sea in January, 1863, but was soon wrecked. The *Georgia* was bought in Scotland, and began her career in April, 1863. Her armament and crew were forwarded from Liverpool in a British ship, and were received in a French port. She took many small prizes during her year of cruising. The *Rappahannock* was bought and escaped British detention near the end of 1863, but she was abandoned before being completely fitted out. Next to the *Alabama*, the *Sea King*, or *Shenandoah*, was the most successful of the Confederate cruisers. But as she did not begin her destructive work until near the end of 1864, her influence upon diplomatic relations was not very important. The possibility that every cruiser might inflict great damages upon the commerce of the United States created excitement and aroused protests whenever it was rumored that a new one was building.

When the first extensive reports of the *Alabama's* achievements became known to Seward, he instructed Adams to lay the facts of the case before the British government in the manner best calculated to obtain redress for the national and private injuries sustained.¹ It was not the intention of the United States, he said, to harass Great Britain with impatient demands for immediate reparation:

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 216, 217.

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"The purpose, first, is prevention of similar injuries hereafter. It is clear that there will soon be no commerce left to the United States if the transaction of the *290* is to be repeated and reiterated without check and with impunity.

"It ought not to be doubted in Great Britain that a people who are only second in commerce to the British nation itself cannot quietly consent to a wrongful strangulation of their foreign trade."¹

Adams was given full discretion as to the manner of presenting the case. His energy and *savoir-faire* made it certain that he could best contend with the British government on questions of international law that required close and well-balanced arguments.² Seward's talent was of a different kind; and, moreover, he was too far away. He quickly saw the political and international meaning of different occurrences, and gave general directions to Adams, who marshaled the facts and usually fought the real diplomatic battle about the Confederate war-ships.

When, in March, 1863, Seward heard of the *Florida's* capture of the *Jacob Bell* and her cargo, valued at a million and a half dollars, he told Adams that many merchants regarded this as portending the destruction of the navigating interest of the United States, unless either the British neutrality law could be enforced or the Federal government should send out an adequate force, under letters of marque and reprisal, to protect the American merchant marine. Just then Seward himself did not hold so extreme a view, for he believed that

¹ 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 14.

² A despatch of March 7, 1862, from Seward to Adams, contained these complimentary sentences: "The President and the Cabinet are perfectly unanimous in approving of all your proceedings as the very best in every case that could be adopted. I may add that the public approbation is equally distinct and earnest. I speak very frankly when I say that I do not recollect the case of any representative of this country abroad who has won more universal approbation than you have."—*Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 44.

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Great Britain was becoming more considerate of our rights.¹ Only a few weeks later he learned that the *Alexandra*, another Confederate war-ship, was nearly ready to go to sea from Liverpool; and it was understood that others were building. Adams was instructed to attempt by judicial proceedings to arrest the departure of the vessels, and William M. Evarts was sent abroad to confer with him in the matter.²

The British government decided to detain the *Alexandra* and to order a prosecution of the persons concerned with what was regarded as a violation of the neutrality law, although, as Adams said, the Ministry would have to breast a good deal of opposition and subject themselves to heavy responsibilities if they should fail.³ Contrary to expectation, the verdict was for the defendants. It was evident that the *Alexandra* was intended for the Confederates, but the decision depended on the rules of law. The Chief Baron charged the jury that the principal offence of actually equipping for hostile purposes could not be completed unless the equipping was so completed in British territory that the vessel was capable of hostile operations, and consequently that the attempt to equip must be with the intent that she should be so completed within British territory.⁴ All efforts were futile to get this decision reversed. The construction put upon the neutrality law by the judges of the Court of Exchequer indicated that ship-builders could safely supply the Confederacy with all the war-ships that could be paid for, if they were not fully equipped in British ports. This would be ample compensation for the Confederacy's misfortune in not being able to build war-ships at home.

¹ 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 141, 142.

² 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 210-12. ✓

³ 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 222.

⁴ This is Dana's statement, Dana's *Wheaton's International Law*, 508.

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The Federal victories at Vicksburg and at Gettysburg caused a despair in England that was almost as profound as the previous confidence of Confederate success.¹ But there were still no signs that the government would do anything to prevent the building and departure of the Confederate vessels. For several months it had been known that the Lairds were constructing at Liverpool two swift iron-clad, double-turreted steam rams. These were "plated with five and a half inches of iron and armed with four 9-inch rifled guns."² As usual, there was a pretence that they were not for the Confederacy; but Adams presented strong evidence to the contrary. It was probable that if these rams should reach the United States, they could lay under contribution any of the loyal cities on the coast or could break the blockade at any point. Here was a possibility of changing the whole course of the war. Practically it was of no consequence that the British government did not wish to help the Confederacy in any way; the important fact was, that it did not prevent such Confederate engines of destruction to be built in and to depart from British ports.

"Can the British government suppose for a moment," Seward wrote to Adams, "that such an assault as is thus meditated can be made upon us by British-built, armed, and manned vessels without at once arousing the whole nation and making a retaliatory war inevitable? You have only to listen to the political debates in any part of the country to learn that the United States would accept an unprovoked foreign war now with more unanimity and cheerfulness than at any former period."³

On the same day, September 5, 1863, Adams informed the British government that one of the iron-clads was on the point of departure from England, and that the refusal to detain these ships would practically

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 836.

² 2 *Maclay's History of the Navy*, 560.

³ 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 836.



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give the Confederates what they believed would bring about results worth a hundred victories in the field. Then, with directness and candor, he added: "It would be superfluous in me to point out to your lordship that this is war." Adams's instructions were such that, if he had not been a consummate diplomatist, he would probably have said or done something more favorable to war than to peace. He desisted from further argument, or closing the legation, and referred the whole case to Washington for decision.¹ A note, dated September 8th, from the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs reads: "Lord Russell presents his compliments to Mr. Adams, and has the honor to inform him that instructions have been issued which will prevent the departure of the two iron-clad vessels from Liverpool."

Commercial interest is nearly always the greatest factor in the foreign policy of the British government. When the Civil War began, the new tariff law was most frequently complained of. Then came the problem of protecting and benefiting British shipping interests. The joint action of Great Britain and France was to shield the commerce of each, but the advantage fell chiefly to Great Britain. A little later the serious question was whether the British government should break or disregard the blockade on account of the losses it was causing to certain industries. But when, during the second and third years of the war, it was seen that American shipping was rapidly coming under the British flag, and that English merchants and manufacturers were

¹ 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 367, 368.

¹ 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 368. Before Adams's note was written Russell had ordered measures to be taken to prevent the departure of the rams, on any pretext; but it was not until the 8th that the government was officially committed as Adams urged.⁴ 4 Rhodes, 877 ff., gives a full and interesting account of the incident.

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profiting immensely by the supplying of ships and munitions of war, there arose, on this account, a strong sentiment in favor of keeping out of the conflict.

Seward understood why Great Britain dreaded a war with the United States. On April 10, 1863, he had instructed Adams to inform the British government that we were at the end of peaceful resources.¹ He frequently wrote in a very significant way of the growing strength of the Federal navy.

"We have now a navy, not, indeed, as ample as we proposed, but yet one which we feel assured is not altogether inadequate to the purposes of self-defence, and it is yet rapidly increasing in men, material, and engines of war. . . . All the world might see, if it would, that the great arm of naval defence has not been thus inaugurated for the mere purpose of maintaining a blockade or enforcing our authority against the insurgents " . . ."

Sometimes he went too far, perhaps. After the victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg he felt confident of the success of the Federal cause in the field; he threw off restraints and instructed Adams—expecting that it would be repeated to the British government—that it should not cause surprise or complaint if the navy of the United States should be directed to pursue the Confederate cruisers into British ports, unless that government changed its course.² Adams too well understood the dignity and peaceful resources of diplomacy to put his country at a disadvantage by repeating this threat.³ When the volume of diplomatic correspondence for that year was published, and the British government heard of what Seward had written, a storm was raised in the House of Commons. This was not calmed until Russell

¹ 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 211.

² To Adams, October 5, 1863. 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 393. See also *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 189, 218.

³ 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 310.



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explained that as the despatch had never been laid before him he had been spared the "difficulty and pain of giving an appropriate answer to it."¹

Still more significant was the frequent suggestion that the United States might have to send out hundreds of privateers to take revenge on British commerce. Seward's eagerness to have all available resources employed early brought him into close relations with men anxious to see privateers used to augment the strength of the Federal navy, although the Confederacy had no commerce for them to prey upon. Seward drafted a bill authorizing the President to issue letters of marque, caused it to be introduced into the Senate, and helped forward the project until Congress approved it. The statute was sure to be a most impressive warning to Great Britain and France, but to use privateers to perform many of the duties of war-ships would be more likely to bring on a war than to help avert one. Seward's despatches frequently contained significant reports as to the progress of the bill and of the new power of the President. This much was politic. Adams had written to the Secretary that to issue letters of marque would be to play into the hands of the Confederates.² But Seward put such stress on the fact that Great Britain's attitude toward the Confederate ships was almost as destructive of American shipping as if the United States were at war with her, that he seemed to think more of trying to counteract this misfortune than of avoiding still greater dangers. Fortunately the influence of Sumner and Welles kept Lincoln from yielding to so hazardous and needless an experiment as was proposed.³

No wonder Seward was not always calm and discreet when he saw the record of losses rapidly increasing from

¹ 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1864, 168.

² 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 158. ♡

³ 4 *Pierce's Sumner*, 120, 129, 130, 138; Welles, 146 ff.; 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 141, 644, 662.

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month to month.¹ Although some of his threats were unnecessary and extreme, his custom was to balance them, in either the same or a subsequent despatch, with soothing sentences that pleaded for the preservation of amicable relations. His aim seemed to be to maintain the impression abroad that war had no fears for him—that he would probably welcome a conflict if Great Britain should wish to begin it, but that it was not necessary to the realization of his own plans and preferences. It had long been a habit for him to work out such subtle inconsistencies. They were never more excusable or valuable than at this time, when he was dealing with a government that was controlled by no unfriendly feeling toward the United States, but that refused, as long as it dared, to put a stop to acts that made its neutrality almost worthless.

In September, 1863, Cobden wrote to Bright: "After all, our chief reliance for the maintenance of a non-intervention policy by France and England is not in the merits or justice of that course, but—it is sad to say—in the tremendous warlike power manifested by the free states of America."² To Seward belongs the credit of making this "tremendous warlike power" famous abroad. In January, 1864, Adams reported that public opinion in England was "essentially changing in regard to the obligation of this country to prevent the gross violations of neutrality that have been heretofore tolerated."³ This change was hastened by the thought now occurring to many that Great Britain had been following a policy that would probably be used against her commerce with most destructive effects

¹ About three hundred vessels belonging to citizens of the United States were destroyed, and nearly eight hundred merchant-ships were compelled, for safety, to give up an American for a British registry.—Scharf, 814 ff.; 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1865, 245.

² 2 Morley's *Cobden*, 413.

³ 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1864, 83.

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whenever she became involved in a foreign war. The British government bought the ironclad rams from the builders, as the best means of solving the difficulty. And before the end of May, 1864, Adams expressed the opinion that the sentiment had become so strong against further countenancing the enterprises of the Confederate agents that probably the base of operations would be transferred to France.¹ Russell had already instructed the British Minister at Washington to make a formal protest and remonstrance "against the efforts of the authorities of the so-called Confederate States to build war-vessels within her Majesty's dominions to be employed against the government of the United States."

The change in the attitude of the British government caused the liveliest indignation on the part of the Confederates. Davis had complained, in his message of December, 1863, of unfriendly action on the part of Great Britain. And later, when he received Lord Lyons's communication inclosing Russell's instructions about the so-called Confederate States, he left the reply to his private secretary, who characterized the term "so-called" as a "studied insult," and said that any future document in which it occurred would be returned unanswered; and he charged that Great Britain's neutrality, "while pretending to be impartial," was "but a cover for treacherous, malignant hostility."² In September, 1864, Benjamin wrote to Slidell: "The English government has scarcely disguised its hostility. From the commencement of the struggle it has professed a newly invented neutrality which it had frankly defined as meaning a course of conduct more favorable to the stronger belligerents."³

¹ 2 *Dip. Cor.*, 1864, 29.

² 8 *Moore's Rebellion Record*, Docs., 514, 515.

³ Bigelow, 164.

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The offence of the British government was that it did not use due diligence to prevent the departure of the Confederate ships or to detain them when they came within colonial ports. The attitude of the French government was very different. As if fearing lest his efforts to enlist Great Britain and Russia in the scheme for joint intervention might not succeed, Napoleon suggested to Slidell, in October, 1862, that the Confederacy might build war-ships in France, if "built as for the Italian government."¹ This was sufficient to convince the Confederates that they had taken too seriously the French declaration of neutrality. Early in 1863, Bulloch, the Confederate agent, opened negotiations with Arman, a great ship-builder at Bordeaux, for "four clipper corvettes of about fifteen hundred tons and four hundred horse-power, to be armed with twelve or fourteen 6-inch rifled guns." Arman, who was a member of the Chamber of Deputies and a friend of the Emperor, easily obtained an official authorization from the Minister of Marine. Two of the ships were to be built at Bordeaux and two at Nantes. The application said that they were "destined by a foreign shipper to ply the Chinese and Pacific seas, between China, Japan, and San Francisco. Their special armament contemplates their eventual sale to the governments of China and Japan."² The fact that these ships were of the type of the *Alabama*, then sweeping the seas, warrants the belief that the French authorities well understood the hollow pretence. A contract for two iron-clad rams of three hundred horse-power, for two million francs each, was also made about this time, and their construction was soon begun. The work was to be pushed forward with all possible haste, and it was expected that all the ships would be completed early in 1864.

¹ Bigelow, 180.

² 2 Bulloch's *Secret Service of the Confederate States in Europe*, 28.

³ Bigelow, 8.

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In September, 1863, a stranger appeared at the United States consulate at Paris and offered to sell to John Bigelow papers showing that several ships were then building at Nantes and Bordeaux for the Confederacy under the official authorization of the French government. The papers were bought for twenty thousand francs. It was found that they had been stolen from one of the leading contractors, and that they contained all that had been claimed for them. They disclosed that one of the contractors had obtained permission to inspect the government factory of arms so as to facilitate his task. Dayton promptly presented the case to Drouyn de Lhuys, and requested that action should be taken to prevent the completion and delivery of the vessels.¹ The French Minister of Foreign Affairs "expressed himself as greatly surprised" at the revelations, and soon pronounced the enterprise a breach of neutrality which the French government would not tolerate, although the contractors stoutly insisted on their original pretension as to the ships. The authorization of the French government was withdrawn in October, 1863. Drouyn de Lhuys informed Dayton of this, and called attention to "the scrupulous care which the government of the Emperor brings to the observance of the rules of a strict neutrality."²

Even Dayton did not know of Napoleon's part in encouraging the Confederates; so the promises of the Minister of Foreign Affairs tended to allay the fears. Seward dealt with this question with great moderation and circumspection. At first he merely reminded Dayton that in a similar case occurring in Great Britain, the United States had not hesitated to declare that the departure of such an expedition would be deemed a na-

¹ Bigelow, p. 1 ff.; ² *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 707, 708.

² *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 702, 725, 727.

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tional aggression justifying resistance likely to disturb amicable relations. While it was hoped that it would never be necessary for Dayton to say this to France, it was important that he should understand that the United States were "resolved not to endure the aggression of a French navy under a feigned insurgent flag."¹ However, the work on the ships continued, for it was expected that Napoleon would dissemble until he saw a good opportunity to let them escape. When, in the spring of 1864, Seward came to fear such an outcome, he concluded to have Drouyn de Lhuys informed as to what the consequences would be.

"This government thinks that the forbearance it has hitherto practised in good faith and friendship toward France," he wrote to Dayton, "has entitled it to expect that the Emperor will not allow his subjects or strangers to wage war against us from the ports of France.

"If this reasonable expectation should be disappointed, it would seem necessary to contemplate a change of existing relations as a consequence which the government of the United States, however much it might be desired, would not have the power to prevent.

"While you are not expected to make a formal representation to precisely this effect, you will at the same time so express yourself as to leave no doubt in the mind of the French government that the President regards the question now to be decided as one upon the solution of which the relations between France and the United States for the future not improbably depend."²

Dayton thought the French government was trying to formulate a case against the United States so as to appear to be on the defensive and entitled to vindicate its honor. But Seward carefully explained the grievances complained of. Yet, seeing that Drouyn de Lhuys had become less positive about preventing the war-ships from getting into the possession of the Confederates, he

¹ October 1, 1863. MS.

² May 21, 1864. MS.



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ordered careful watch to be taken of the alleged sale of the rams and the corvettes to foreign governments, and then he caused two United States war-ships in European waters to be placed under Dayton's orders.¹

Seward had his reasons for being so cautious. When he first heard that the war-ships were building in France, the relations with Great Britain were for a similar reason in a very critical state. Although the likelihood of a rupture with Great Britain diminished during the autumn and winter of 1863-64, there was still some danger that new and serious complications might be used as an excuse for foreign interference. On February 22, 1864, Seward wrote a note to Bigelow that contained these sentences: "Before we decide what to do *more* in France, we wait to be a little better assured about our affairs in *England*. You can infer from this what I do not think it perfectly safe to write." On the same day he replied to a letter from William M. Evarts, written in Paris: "We want to know whether, if we have a difficulty on one side of the Channel, we must expect an enemy also on the other—two enemies instead of one. Circumstances favor a good understanding with the Cabinet at London. We could clear up all difficulties if Great Britain should be willing." It was shortly after this time that Congress became very excited over the Mexican question, as will soon be noticed, and the French government seemed to be almost ready for a conflict. Seward saw that we were not prepared for a foreign war; therefore, he made a special effort to pitch his despatches in a friendly tone. Bigelow, who had not been fully informed as to all the perplexities of the case, very frankly told Sew-

¹ 8 *Dip. Cor.*, 1864, 115, 117; MS. instructions to Dayton, June 27, 1864.

² Seward MSS. Possibly this letter was never sent, for it is not in the Bigelow MSS. The autograph draft is in the Seward MSS.

³ Seward MSS.

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ard that his "charming compliments to the French government," which was "doing all it can [could] to cut our throats," discouraged the opposition from attacking the Emperor, and he thought that a decisive tone would soon be necessary.¹ But in dealing with France the Secretary knew the importance of waiting, and replied:

"I regret that you think my course towards the French government is too conciliatory and courteous. If our armies succeed, as we hope, we shall have no conflict with France, or with any foreign power. So long as our success in suppressing the slavery faction at home is doubted abroad, we shall be in danger of war with some one of the maritime powers upon some sudden provocation. If we have war with one, we may expect to have war with more than one. If we escape war with all, my courtesy to France will have done no harm. If we shall at last, through unavoidable delay here, fall under the calamity of a foreign war, it will then have come soon enough; and we shall be none the less able to meet it for all the prudence we practised in trying to delay and, if possible, to avert it."

This was certainly the perfection of logic and of diplomacy.

Napoleon insisted on the disposal of all the ships to foreign nations. Only one, the *Sphinx*, finally came into the possession of the Confederates, but this was brought about so late that peace was declared before it could reach American waters.

The disappointment of the Confederate diplomatists was intense. They had firmly and correctly believed that Napoleon was in sympathy with them. Their mistake was in concluding that he would, therefore, give them substantial aid, regardless of his own interests. Benjamin devoted a large part of a long despatch that he sent Slidell to a formal arraignment, under eight heads, of

¹ Bigelow, 42.

² May 21, 1864. Bigelow MSS.



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the Emperor of the French for his unfriendly acts toward the Confederacy.¹ He made himself believe that Napoleon had promised that the ships might go to sea. But Slidell had distinctly stated that the Emperor had not committed himself to permit the sailing of the rams unless their destination could be concealed. The consent to the arming and sailing of the corvettes was given by the Minister of Marine on the representation that they were for commercial purposes, although he understood the fact.² But when Napoleon found that the misrepresentations were no longer a shield, he did not feel bound to stand by the Confederates in the altered circumstances. Undoubtedly his original expectation was that a turn in American affairs favorable to the Confederacy would be reached before any international question could be raised about the ships.

With Great Britain Seward had negotiated as with a drawn sword. With France he either pleaded for peace or made his warnings very mild. The result showed that his method in each case was essentially right. Neither government failed to see that there was a sword. Slidell unintentionally gave high praise to Seward when he wrote: "The two strongest powers submit to the insolent demands of the Lincoln government that their commerce may be safe on the ocean, and Mexico and Canada unmolested. And why? Because they have formed an exaggerated estimate of its capacity to do mischief."³ Seward had caused them to make that estimate.

¹ Text in Bigelow, 161-65.

² Bigelow, 153.

³ Bigelow, 160.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE END OF THE WAR

ONE night in July, 1863, during the rejoicing over the victory at Vicksburg, some paraders stopped in front of Seward's house, serenaded him, and called for a speech. His impromptu response displayed patriotic fervor and sentimental egotism, but it also truly represented his recent aims and his hopes for the future:

"When I saw a commotion upheaving in the state, I thought it consistent with the duty of a patriot and a Christian to avert the civil war if it was possible, and I tried to do so. If this was a weakness, I found what seemed an instruction excusing it in the prayer of our Savior that the cup, the full bitterness of which was understood by himself alone, might pass. But I found, also, an instruction in regard to my duty in his resignation: 'Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.' When it was clear that without fault on your part or mine the civil war was inevitable, I then thought it consistent with the duty of a patriot and a Christian to take care that the war should be begun not by the friends of the Union, but by its enemies, so that in maintaining the Union we should not only maintain the cause of our country, but should be maintaining it in righteous self-defence." . . .

"I thought, further, that it was consistent with my duty as a patriot and a Christian to do what was in my power to render the war as light in its calamities and as short in its duration as possible. Therefore, I proposed to retain on the side of the loyal states as many of the states which were disturbed by elements of sedition as could be retained by a course of calm and judicious conduct. I would have had, if possible, the insurrection confined to

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the seven original so-called seceding states. When all these conditions had been secured, so far as was possible to secure them, I thought still further that it was consistent with my duty as a patriot and a Christian to combine the loyal states and consolidate them into one party for the Union, because I knew that disunion had effectually combined the people of the disloyal states to overthrow the Union." . . .

"Once engaged in the contest, I was prepared to demand, as I have demanded ever since, that no treasure, no amount of human life necessary to save the nation's life, should be withheld. I thought that the war might be ended in three months—in six months—in a year—and I labored to that end. . . . We failed to make that exhibition [of zeal, determination, and consistency], and so the war has been protracted into its third year." . . .

"But we have reached, I think, the culminating point at last; we have ascertained the amount of sacrifice which is necessary to save the Union, and the country is prepared to make it." . . .

. . . "The Union is to be saved, after all, only by human efforts—by the efforts of the people." . . .

"You must be prepared to do more. . . . If the capital must fall before it can be saved, which I have always thought unnecessary, and which now seems impossible, even in that case, let us be buried amid its ruins. For myself, this is my resolution. If the people of the United States have virtue enough to save the Union, I shall have their virtue. If they have not, then it shall be my reward that my virtue excelled that of my countrymen."¹

The administration decided early in July, 1863, to issue a proclamation calling for a day of thanksgiving for the great military successes that had been achieved. Its preparation was given to Seward, who sat himself down, as he wrote to his wife, "to compose a presidential call upon the people for thanksgiving, prayer, and praise to our Heavenly Father. I think you must have read in it and under it what I think and how I feel."²

¹ 5 *Works*, 485-88.

² 8 Seward, 176. He referred to Lincoln's proclamation of July 17, 1863.

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Shortly after the battle of Gettysburg it had been decided to secure a part of the battle-field for a cemetery, where the bodies of the fallen combatants might be brought together in fraternal burial. In November, 1863, the cemetery was ready for dedication. Edward Everett was the orator of the day. The President, the Secretary of State, and others formed a special party from Washington. On the evening of November 18, 1863, not long after their arrival, they were serenaded, and Seward responded to a call for a speech. He was upward of sixty years of age, he said, and had been in public life practically forty years, and this was the first time the people so near the border of Maryland had been willing to hear his voice. The reason was, he continued, that forty years before he saw that slavery was opening a graveyard that was to be filled with brothers falling in strife. During all this period he had tried to have the cause removed by constitutional means. He thanked God that the people were willing to hear him at last, and that the strife was to end in the destruction of an evil that should have been removed by deliberate councils and peaceful means. He believed that thereafter we should

“be united, be only one country, having only one hope, one ambition, and one destiny.

“To-morrow, at least, we shall feel that we are not enemies, but that we are friends and brothers, that this Union is a reality, and we shall mourn together for the evil wrought by this rebellion. We are now near the graves of the misguided, whom we have consigned to their last resting-place, with pity for their errors, and with the same heart full of grief with which we mourn over a brother by whose hand, raised in defence of his government, that misguided brother perished.”¹

It was on the morrow—after Everett’s long and brill-

¹ 5 *Works*, 490.

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iant oration—that Lincoln uttered what is probably the briefest and most perfect patriot-speech in any language. Its impressiveness was in its impersonality and in the modesty that recognized the occasion as one on which the living should “be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.”

One of the wisest decisions of Seward's life was made near the end of 1861. It was to relinquish all aspirations for the presidency. But it was not so easy for his political friends to surrender their hopes. In December, 1861, some of them in Philadelphia organized a “William H. Seward Club” for the purpose of making him Lincoln's successor. When they informed Seward of the fact he pronounced the proceeding “altogether unwise,” “a partisan movement, and, worst of all, a partisan movement of a personal character”; and he insisted that his name should be dropped “henceforth and forever.”¹ No evidence has been found to indicate that

¹ “If, when the present civil war was looming up before us,” he wrote, “I had cherished an ambition to attain the high position you have indicated, I should have adopted one of two courses which lay open to me—namely, either to withdraw from the public service at home to a position of honor without great responsibility abroad, or to retire to private life, and, avoiding the caprices of fortune, await the chances of public favor.

“But I deliberately took another course. I renounced all ambition, and came into the executive government to aid in saving the Constitution and integrity of my country or to perish with them. I knew that I must necessarily renounce all expectation of future personal advantage, in order that the counsels I might give to the President in such a crisis should not only be, but be recognized as being, disinterested, loyal, and patriotic.

“Acting on this principle, I shun no danger and shrink from no responsibilities. So I neither look for, nor, if it should be offered to me, would I ever hereafter accept, any reward.”

“I could never consent to be a President of a division of the Republic. I cheerfully give up any aspiration for rule in the whole

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the Secretary ever thought of reconsidering the decision here announced and soon made public.¹ In the summer of 1863 John Bigelow wrote an article for a Paris newspaper, suggesting Seward's candidacy in 1864. He then sent a copy to the Secretary, and at the same time expressed a desire to resign. Seward's jocose and unofficial answer of July 21, 1863, said:

"MY DEAR BIGELOW,—I have just received your letter of the 3d inst., and I am glad that you remain in the consulate. I suppose that I can imagine the reason why you desire to resign, and, if I do, I am the more convinced that you ought to stay at your post.

"I shall certainly report your violation of your instructions, by your article in the *Opinion Nationale*, to the President, though I will mercifully withhold the deserved punishment. Some good but impatient friends, as you see, are bringing his name forward for re-election. It will show you how just and generous he is in that he is able to overlook your crime of putting me in his way, and I think that he will only be the more decided in his conviction that you must stay where you are. As for me, I am bent upon leading the way for whosoever may follow in restoring peace and Union in our unhappy country, by withdrawing all the provocations to anger that are associated with my name."

The military victories of the summer of 1863 were a promise of political victories in the autumn. What Seward said in a speech in Auburn, just before the election, was the most positive evidence that he cherished no ambition beyond his present position as Secretary of

Republic as a contribution to the efforts necessary to maintain it in its integrity. I not only ask but peremptorily require my friends, in whose behalf you have written to me, to drop my name, henceforth and forever, from among those to whom they look as possible candidates."—8 Seward, 50. Welles erroneously asserted that this position was not taken until after the Cabinet crisis of December, 1862.—*Lincoln and Seward*, 84, 85.

¹ New York *Herald*, March 4, 1862.

² Bigelow MSS. 8 Seward, 196, gives a report of a conversation on this subject, in 1863, between Lincoln and Seward.



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State: Lincoln must be *de facto* President in Georgia and in South Carolina, just as he was in Massachusetts and in New York, and there should be no peace and quiet until he was President of the whole United States.'

The result of the elections showed that the people were ready to support the administration even in its vigorous war measures, but on condition that the Federal armies should win battles. During the next year there was a very close connection between events in the field and the political turmoil in the North. Grant was made lieutenant-general in March, 1864. He came to Washington and undertook a formidable campaign against Richmond. Sherman was placed at the head of the three armies that had done such hard fighting, especially in Mississippi and Tennessee. He too began, in this spring, his task of cutting the eastern part of the Confederacy in two by sweeping through Georgia from Chattanooga to Savannah. He advanced with wonderful regularity and without serious reverses. It was not so with Grant. He believed that, with a force almost twice as great as Lee's, his forward movement could not be resisted. The loss of thirty-six thousand men in the Wilderness and about Spottsylvania during a fortnight, in May, 1864, made it plain that ultimate success was not merely a question of numbers, momentum, and courage. Almost every adult in the East counted a friend or relative among the dead or the wounded in Virginia. Such terrible destruction of human life led to popular discontent, which the politicians undertook to make use of.

The radical Republicans did not cease their attacks upon the administration as its antislavery policy became more pronounced, for they kept far ahead, demanding extreme measures. Chase had endeavored to make himself the beneficiary of this hypercritical discontent—a

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fact that greatly strengthens the circumstantial evidence that he had been an important factor in the anti-Seward movement in the latter part of 1862; but he succeeded merely in getting himself out of the Cabinet. The radical faction tried to organize a distinct party at Cleveland, on a platform that favored electing the President by popular vote and making him ineligible for a second term, the reconstruction of the states under direction of Congress rather than of the President, and "the confiscation of the lands of rebels and their distribution among the soldiers and actual settlers." Frémont was appropriately chosen as their candidate.

But there was no room for an anti-administration movement outside of the Democratic party. Lincoln and Seward stood for the restoration of the Union without retracing any steps, and they were willing to aid in any new measures beneficial to this main purpose. The regular Republican convention, which met at Baltimore early in June, represented what was best and most practical in the character of Northerners. Its platform was a sober appeal for help, as well as an expression of determination to finish the solemn task that had been forced upon the Federal government. Lincoln was renominated, and Andrew Johnson was named for the second place because the party desired to win the support of Democrats and southern Unionists. In a public letter written a little later, Seward said everybody knew that he himself was "committed in detail to all that the convention has now done, long before a delegate was chosen, and even long before the convention itself was called." And then he added: "For the present, let the people send men and supplies to the nation's armies in the field, and thus enable them 'to fight it out on the same line if it takes all summer.'"¹

¹ 3 Seward, 226.



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The best element in the Democratic party was supporting the administration either by service in the field or by giving it confidence and cheer at home. The partisan Democrats of 1864 were a miscellaneous horde of men, whose narrow minds were less influenced by sentiments of reasonable patriotism than by personal grievances or unworthy ambitions. They agreed among themselves in hardly anything except opposition to existing conditions and a desire to profit by every national misfortune, past, present, and future. So they postponed their convention until the end of August. Meantime, Sherman drove Johnston before him toward Atlanta; but Grant and his soldiers, like faithful oxen drawing a too heavy load in the mire, struggled on slowly, doggedly, painfully. In less than two months from the beginning of his campaign he had lost more than half of all his original troops—about sixty-two thousand out of one hundred and twenty-two thousand. By midsummer he had moved around Richmond and begun the siege of Petersburg; but the Confederate capital seemed to be as inaccessible as ever. Moreover, Washington had escaped capture, and probably flames, chiefly on account of a misapprehension. Early had rushed out of the Shenandoah Valley and down to the ill-manned forts on Washington's northern suburbs before proper defence could be made. But mistaking local recruits for a detachment of Grant's army, he delayed his advance another day, when the veterans actually appeared and blocked the way. When the Democrats met in national convention at Chicago, August 29th, they pronounced the war a failure and called for a cessation of hostilities with a view to an ultimate convention of the states. McClellan was chosen as their candidate, but he repudiated the platform. The Democrats had barely formulated their unpatriotic and impracticable policy when Atlanta fell, September 2d; it was as unwelcome as an earthquake to them.

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✓ On the following day Seward took advantage of the change in affairs to sound the key-note of the campaign in a speech at Auburn. No man not blinded by partisanship or prejudice could fail to see the force of such arguments as these :

“In voting for a President of the United States, can we wisely or safely vote out the identical person whom, with force and arms, we are fighting into the presidency? You justly say, No. It would be nothing else than to give up the very object of the war at the ballot-box. . . . By such a proceeding we shall have agreed with the enemy, and shall have given him the victory. But in that agreement the Constitution and the Union will have perished, because, when it shall have once been proved that a minority can by force or circumvention defeat the full accession of a constitutionally chosen President, no President thereafter, though elected by ever so large a majority, can hope to exercise the executive powers unopposed throughout the whole country. . . . I therefore regard the pending presidential election as involving the question whether, hereafter, we shall have our Constitution and our country left us. . . . Upon these grounds entirely, irrespective of platform and candidate, I consider the recommendations of the convention at Chicago as tending to subvert the republic.

“And now,” he said, near the end of his speech, “has all the treasure that has been spent, and all the precious blood that has been poured forth, gone for nothing else but to secure an ignominious retreat, and return, at the end of four years, to the hopeless imbecility and rapid process of national dissolution which existed when Abraham Lincoln took into his hands the reins of government?”¹

The only possibility of victory for the Democrats depended upon continual defeats for the Federal army; but there was no hope for them in the face of an energetic political campaign in which the Republicans were cheered on by Sheridan's successes in the Shenandoah valley and by Sherman's in Georgia. Lincoln won in all the loyal states except New Jersey, Delaware, and Kentucky.

¹ 5 *Works*, 496, 501.

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"It is a truism," Seward wrote in one of his despatches early in 1865, "that in times of peace there are always instigators of war. So soon as war begins, there are citizens who impatiently demand negotiations for peace." As the exhaustion of Confederate resources increased, Southerners tried harder to accomplish indirectly what could not be brought about by force of arms. Many Northerners, too, that were opposed to Lincoln's administration, believed that a voluntary peace would be the surest road to reunion. There was rarely a month, and never a season, when some Democratic leader was not overflowing with illusory schemes for a cessation of hostilities. The great mortality in the Federal army in Virginia in the spring and early summer of 1864 strengthened the anti-war sentiment. Three prominent Confederates, who had found their way to Canada, convinced Horace Greeley that they were authorized to carry on negotiations for peace. Greeley appealed to Lincoln with so much zeal that the President requested him to bring the alleged commissioners to Washington in case he should find that they were more than pretenders. It turned out that Greeley was merely the victim of men scheming to embarrass the administration and to defeat Lincoln's re-election.

About the same time a clerical soldier in an Illinois regiment, James F. Jaquess, and a journalist and author, J. R. Gilmore, went on an unofficial mission to Richmond. Jaquess represented that he had assurances that many prominent members of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the South were opposed to Confederate aims and favored a return to the Union. The President merely gave the two dreamers permission to pass the Federal lines. They had a long interview with Davis and Benjamin, but they learned only what Lincoln felt confident of already—that Davis insisted upon independence as a precedent condition of peace.

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The result of the election of 1864 proved that Lincoln and Grant had the confidence of the North and could command its full strength. Before the end of the year Sherman had triumphantly reached Savannah. Grant, although still in front of Petersburg, was daily becoming more formidable. It was almost certain that the Confederacy could not hold out more than a few months longer, for the great bulk of the Federal troops in the East were to be concentrated about Richmond early in 1865, unless it should fall meantime. What Lincoln's administration wanted was peace and reunion, and it would have preferred to obtain them by negotiation rather than by battles.

Near the end of December, 1864, Francis P. Blair, Sr., elaborated a scheme to overcome the difficulties. The gist of it was that the belligerents should enter into a military convention to cease hostilities between themselves, for a time at least, and devote their efforts to driving the French out of Mexico; that Jefferson Davis should command a union of Confederate, Federal, and Mexican forces—be made dictator, if necessary—expel “the Bonaparte-Hapsburg dynasty,” establish order in Mexico, and perhaps round out the possessions of the United States to the Isthmus. This would restore the balance between the sections and make the South blossom again with prosperity. By that time it would be seen that there was really nothing more to fight about, for each side had adopted a policy toward slavery that would soon bring it to an end.¹ Lincoln neither knew Blair's plans nor assumed any responsibility for them, but gave him the necessary pass.

The Confederate President received Blair as an old acquaintance and listened with much interest to the surprising propositions, for any strategy that offered a pos-

¹ For Blair's full programme, see 10 Nicolay and Hay, 91 ff.

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sibility of escape from the danger threatening the Confederate capital must not be neglected. Davis gave the visitor a written statement, to be shown to Lincoln, saying that he was ready to enter into a conference "with a view to secure peace to the two countries." Lincoln heard Blair's report of what had taken place, and wrote him a note, to be shown to Davis, expressing his willingness to receive any agent sent informally and authorized to consider the question of "peace to the people of our one common country." Vice-President Stephens advised Davis to meet Lincoln,¹ but the Confederate chief knew that in such an enterprise as this there was safety in numbers. So he appointed Stephens, R. M. T. Hunter, and John A. Campbell, then Assistant Secretary of War. The Confederates finally gave up trying to force an implied recognition of sovereignty by referring to the "two countries."

On January 31, 1865, Lincoln instructed Seward to proceed to Fortress Monroe, Virginia, "to meet and informally confer with" these three commissioners. The instructions were very explicit:

"You will make known to them that three things are indispensable, to wit: First. The restoration of the national authority throughout all the states. Second. No receding by the Executive of the United States on the slavery question from the position assumed thereon in the late annual message to Congress, and in preceding documents. Third. No cessation of hostilities short of an end of the war, and the disbanding of all forces hostile to the government. You will inform them that all propositions of theirs, not inconsistent with the above, will be considered and passed upon in a spirit of sincere liberality. You will hear all they may choose to say, and report it to me. You will not assume to definitely consummate anything."²

After Seward had departed Lincoln was shown a

¹ 2 Stephens's *War Between the States*, 593.

² 10 Nicolay and Hay, 115.

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despatch from Grant in which a regret was expressed that the President was not to meet Stephens and Hunter, especially, who had impressed Grant as having good intentions and a sincere desire to restore peace and union. This persuaded the President to hurry off to take part in the consultation. It would have been a needless risk for one man, however reserved in conversation, to carry on such a conference with these three Confederates. Perhaps, too, Lincoln remembered Seward's unfortunate interviews with Campbell and Hunter, in 1861, and with Mercier a year later.

What is known as the "Hampton Roads Conference," on account of the place where it occurred, was on board the Federal ship *River Queen*, February 3, 1865. It was on the Mexican scheme that the Confederates were basing their hopes. Stephens soon asked if there was not some side issue that could be used to divert the attention of the two sections until passions might cool—some continental question, after the solution of which they would be in a more amicable mood for adjusting difficulties among themselves. Lincoln understood the meaning of this reference, and explained that he was not responsible for what Blair had said; that he himself adhered to the declaration that a restoration of the Union was a prerequisite to any agreement whatever. Still, believing that the Mexican project was not positively barred, Stephens spoke of the hostility of the United States to the French invasion and of their desire to enforce the Monroe doctrine. He understood this to mean that the North would support the right of self-government to all peoples on the American continent, against the dominion or control of any European power. Could any pledge make a permanent restoration of the Union more certain than it would be after this doctrine had been asserted in regard to Mexico? Lincoln repeated what he had said about having nothing to do with an armis-

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tice or with any proposition that did not involve the restoration of the Federal authority throughout the whole country. Campbell then thought it time to introduce another question, but Seward was so interested in Stephens's speculations that he wanted to hear them developed further; for, as he said, they had "a philosophical basis."¹ It was to be expected that the very marked resemblance between Stephens's idea as expressed so far and the one Seward had advanced April 1, 1861, would interest the Secretary. But Seward's aim was to preserve the Union, whereas Stephens's plan was primarily to establish the principle of local self-government and the right of secession. This would have been a vindication—in the eyes of all Confederates, at least—of the aims of the South, although Stephens hoped that an "ocean-bound Federal Republic" would come into existence "under the operation of this *Continental Regulator*—the ultimate absolute Sovereignty of each State."² Moral suasion and self-interest were to be the only cohesive forces. Seward easily exploded the theory by pointing out that according to it Louisiana might shut up the Mississippi. Stephens had to admit that in case of wanton injustice on the part of a state, coercion might be used. Still Seward wanted to continue the speculation about the Mexican question, and he inquired as to how the Confederates expected to make their suggestions practical. This brought out the fact that the commissioners had neither the authority nor the wish to pledge Confederate military support to the effort to overthrow European influence in Mexico.³ The trap was thereby exposed.

Evidently Seward was desirous of peace, and very naturally; for, if he could have been instrumental in bringing it about now, it would be a great compensa-

¹ 2 Stephens, 603.

² 2 Stephens, 604.

³ 2 Stephens, 606.

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tion for his disappointment in the spring of 1861. The Confederates had not heard that Congress had just proposed the XIII. Amendment. Seward at least suggested that if the states in secession would promptly resume their old places, they might defeat the adoption of the amendment. Both he and Lincoln expressed their willingness to favor a plan for compensating the South for her slaves. It was thought that the North would prefer such an indemnity rather than expend the money in prosecuting the war. Lincoln said that some Northerners had mentioned as much as four million dollars for this peaceful purpose.

Beyond the point of submission to the laws, and standing by what had already been done, the President promised to act with liberality in all matters that fell within his constitutional powers. But again and again he came back to his wise declaration that no agreement would be entered into until after the Confederates had laid down their arms. Hunter undertook to show that there was a precedent for such an agreement in the negotiations between Charles I. and the Roundheads. It was then that Lincoln gave the answer, as characteristic of himself as it was of his attitude toward Seward: "I do not profess to be posted in history. On all such matters I turn you over to Seward. All I distinctly recollect about the case of Charles I. is that he lost his head in the end."¹ After a session of four hours the conferrees concluded that there was no possibility of reaching any agreement.

The Confederates returned in sadness and anger to their capital, still unwilling to believe that Lincoln had never intended to offer some such terms as Blair had suggested. Stephens soon withdrew to the quiet of his Georgia home, as if to escape being crushed beneath a

¹ 2 Stephens, 613.

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structure that he foresaw must soon fall. But Davis, who had courage, enterprise, and daring suitable for so desperate a cause, made the most of every circumstance. Public meetings were held, at which he and other impressive orators aroused the passions and determination of the people until all came to believe that victory was still within their reach.

The North soon learned the chief facts about the conference. Although it had failed in one sense, it was very successful in another: it convinced all sensible men that the peace demanded could only be obtained by a thorough conquest.

Already Sherman's vast devastating flood was sweeping northward from Savannah. Nothing but fear of the popular effect of abandoning Richmond had caused the government to hold out so desperately against the Federal forces, which were working successfully on the plan of strangulation. On the night of April 2d, Petersburg and Richmond were abandoned, and the army and the government officials, with the archives, hurried off southwestward, hoping to make a successful stand on reaching the Blue Ridge mountains, if not before. But Sheridan cut off Lee's retreat. After quickly occupying Petersburg and Richmond, Grant followed up and surrounded Lee. The end came at Appomattox Court House April 9, 1865. What followed was merely gathering up the scattered fragments.

During the two months since the meeting at Hampton Roads, Seward had watched the course of events with great satisfaction. "Our foreign relations are closing up finely," he wrote home, shortly after the conference. His pen was not less active than formerly, for he was inditing long despatches about the numerous military engagements. He could write a smooth, clear story of whatever occurred in the field, and the pleasure he found

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in keeping an open diary on the war led him to give much time and labor to it. What afforded him the most satisfaction was to mark the growing disorder and desperation in Richmond:

"The dismay at Richmond rises to distraction. It is not doubtful that there has been a conspiracy to force Davis to resign." "It is understood that the insurrectionary cabal has at last, under Virginia's dictation, passed a bill for arming slaves—leaving to the states the question, whether the negroes thus brought into the field shall be emancipated." "The so-called Congress, on the eve of an intended adjournment, was detained by a message from Davis, announcing that Richmond is in imminent danger, and demanding extreme measures and virtually dictatorial powers, including a suspension of the *habeas corpus*, unlimited control over exemptions, and authority to seize gold for the uses of the rebel authorities. The so-called legislature listened and adjourned, as is understood, without reviewing the policy of which Davis complained, and without conceding the most, much less all, of the extraordinary powers demanded."¹

On a bright spring afternoon, April 5, 1865, Seward went for a drive with his daughter, one of her friends, and his son Frederick. The horses became frightened, and the Secretary, in attempting to get out of the carriage, was thrown to the ground with great force. He was picked up unconscious; his jaw was broken in two places; his right shoulder was badly dislocated, and nearly his whole body was bruised and strained. The jaw was set in an iron frame, and in every way he received the best scientific care. Nevertheless, he remained unconscious for several hours and then was delirious for many more. Fever set in, and there were serious doubts as to his recovery. But in a few days favorable signs appeared.

Lincoln was absent on a visit to Grant's army when

¹ 3 Seward, 266, 267, 268.

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the accident occurred. On his return he went to see Seward. Sitting on the bed by the invalid, he quietly described what he had seen in and about the late capital of the Confederacy. Seward could not even whisper without great pain. So the monologue was continued in soft tones for an hour or so, until Seward fell asleep; then the President quietly slipped away. They never saw each other again.

About ten o'clock in the evening of April 14th, when Seward's sick-room had been put in order for the night, an unknown man rang the door-bell and told the servant that he brought a message from the physician. As there was nothing suspicious about him, he was allowed to pass up-stairs; but at Seward's door he was refused admission by Frederick W. Seward. The stranger tried in vain to fire his revolver, and then savagely beat the Assistant Secretary over the head with it, until the weapon broke. Then bursting open the door, he rushed at the Secretary, striking furious blows at his head and throat with a bowie-knife, until Seward rolled from the other side of the bed to the floor. The male nurse, who tried to protect the Secretary, received some bad cuts, and so did Augustus Seward, who undertook to expel the assassin. As the assailant was leaving he wounded a fifth man, and then rode off on the horse he had left near the front door. Seward's throat had been "cut on both sides, his right cheek nearly severed from his face." Probably it was the iron frame on his jaw that turned a blow that might have caused instant death. As it was, the chances seemed to be that either the wounds or the terrible shock would be fatal.¹ The life of the Assistant Secretary was despaired of, for his skull was badly fractured in two places. At nearly the precise moment of

¹ For a full account of Seward's accident and attempted assassination, and of the fate of Powell, alias Payne, see 3 Seward, 270 ff., and 10 Nicolay and Hay, 303 ff.

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the assault upon Seward, Lincoln was shot while at Ford's theatre, and he died early the following morning.

As far back as June, 1862, John Bigelow had written to Seward from Paris about a rumored plot to assassinate the President and some of his Cabinet. In a letter of July 15, 1862, Seward replied as follows :

"There is no doubt that from a period anterior to the breaking out of the insurrection, plots and conspiracies for purposes of assassination have been frequently formed and organized. And it is not unlikely that such an one as has been reported to you is now in agitation among the insurgents. If it be so it need furnish no ground for anxiety. Assassination is not an American practice or habit, and one so vicious and desperate cannot be engrafted into our political system.

"This conviction of mine has steadily gained strength since the Civil War began. Every day's experience confirms it. The President, during the heated season, occupies a country-house near the Soldiers' Home, two or three miles from the city. He goes to and comes from that place on horseback, night and morning, unguarded. I go there unattended at all hours, by daylight and by moonlight, by starlight and without any light."¹

Seward had a philosophical theory for everything he wished to believe. But, alas! the unexpected happened. Fortunately, the five men wounded at his house recovered.

¹ Bigelow MSS.



CHAPTER XL

SEWARD'S ATTITUDE TOWARD FRENCH INTERVENTION IN MEXICO

SEWARD's treatment of Napoleon's attempt to overthrow a republican form of government in Mexico and to place in its stead an imperial throne with an Austrian prince was his most perfect achievement in diplomacy. No other question in his department was for a long time so puzzling, so changing, so dangerous, or so misjudged by the people and the public men of the United States. No mere accident, no circumstance, no fortune, good or ill, could have given Seward success; one or all of these might have helped, but a genius for diplomacy was necessary.

Ever since the Spanish yoke had been thrown off, in 1821, Mexico had been subject to revolution and counter-revolution, generally led by some chief of either the Liberal or the Clerical party. In forty years there had been nearly forty revolutions and over seventy different supreme executives. Government was hardly more than a name. Assaults and murders were frequent in the capital, guerilla warfare was common in the provinces, and banditti infested the highways. Even the British legation had been robbed of about six hundred thousand dollars in coin. So insufferable had become the outrages upon foreigners that the French and the English Ministers loudly protested; and President Buchanan, in his last annual message, recommended intervention on the part of the United States to obtain indemnity. In 1861 the

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constitutional President was Benito Juarez. He was a full-blooded Indian, ~~but~~ a man of character, energy, and extraordinary attainments. Although Miramon, the leader of the Church party, had been completely defeated and had fled from Mexico, leaving the party without organization, yet plotting did not cease. Juarez and the Liberals about him had some honest and statesman-like purposes, but they had not the power to restore order or to correct abuses. England, France, Spain, and the United States had claims against Mexico amounting to more than eighty million dollars, but Mexican finances were in a chaotic state. The annual governmental expenses alone exceeded the revenue by nearly a million dollars. In July, 1861, the Mexican Congress sought temporary relief by passing an act suspending for two years the payment of all foreign debts. This brought matters to a crisis.

The question as to how to compel Mexico to respect her obligations had often been discussed. England, France, and Spain now decided to take matters into their own hands. Aside from the grievances complained of by these powers, each had its notion of the probable results of intervention. Spain had not yet become fully reconciled to the loss of her American colonies, and she thought of a throne for a Bourbon prince. England very reasonably believed that no intervention should go beyond the point of seeking redress for actual injuries.¹ France had several aims which will soon be noticed. On the 31st of October, 1861, these three powers signed a convention in London, by which they agreed to demand jointly from Mexico "more efficacious protection for the persons and properties of their subjects, as well as a fulfilment of the obligations contracted toward their Majesties." Article second of the convention read :

¹ 2 Earl Russell's *Speeches and Despatches*, 484.

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"The high contracting parties engage not to seek for themselves, in the employment of the coercive measures contemplated by the present convention, any acquisition of territory nor any special advantage, and not to exercise in the internal affairs of Mexico any influences of a nature to prejudice the right of the Mexican nation to choose and to constitute freely the form of its government."¹

Toward the end of 1861 naval ships of Spain, France, and England sailed for Vera Cruz with the avowed intention of taking possession of the custom-houses of two or three of the Mexican ports, for the purpose of satisfying the claims of their respective governments.

Within a few weeks after the arrival of these ships, before the allies had done much more than seize Vera Cruz, the English and the Spanish leaders became dissatisfied with the actions, and suspicious of the intentions of the French. The English and the Spanish forces withdrew in April, 1862, after an agreement had been reached with Mexico as to the claims of their governments. The triple alliance was dissolved, and the French were left with a free hand.

The three European powers had not only agreed among themselves not to prejudice "the right of the Mexican nation to choose and constitute freely the form of its government," but they had invited the United States to join them in compelling Mexico to respect her obligations.

It was in the midst of the excitement over the French affair that the United States had to deal with this problem. To protest against the action of the powers would have made it easy for Great Britain to obtain the sympathy, and perhaps the support, of France and Spain in case of a war on account of that incident. More than the precise significance of the Mexican expedition was not yet known. So Seward indicated that the

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United States would stand aloof. They declined to become a party to the London convention, chiefly for two excellent reasons: they preferred to adhere to the traditional policy, which forbade alliances with foreign nations; and, secondly, they did not feel inclined to resort to forcible remedies for claims at that time, when Mexico was deeply disturbed by factions within and by war with foreign nations.¹ In the same communication in which these reasons were set forth, Seward volunteered the statement that

“the President does not feel himself at liberty to question, and he does not question, that the sovereigns represented have [the] undoubted right to decide for themselves the fact whether they have sustained grievances, and to resort to war with Mexico for the redress thereof, and have the right also to levy war severally or jointly.”

From beginning to end the Mexican expedition was the strangest scheme of the Second Empire. Like many of the enterprises of Napoleon III., if not too grand for formulation before execution, it was, at least, too absurd for explanation subsequently. His political aims really too precedence to what were known as French “grievances.” The Italian war had left him many perplexing questions. Austria bore him much ill-will. The Pope had not forgotten how Napoleon III. had injured his temporal power. The French Republicans threatened to interfere with the so-called *grande politique impériale*. Leaving out of consideration the promptings of Napoleon’s balanced ambition, the Mexican revolution seemed present just the opportunity to appease Austria, to induce the Holy Father to smile benignly, and to reduce the Republicans at home to a patriotic hush or to an odious opposition. Nor was commercial France forgotten, for the United States were occupied in a great civil war.

¹ Doc. 100, p. 189.

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Napoleon thought he saw a chance to prevent their preponderance in trade in the western hemisphere, by laying in Mexico the foundations of French supremacy, so as to turn the tide of race predominance in the Americas in favor of the Latins, as he said.

After the English and the Spanish retired from Vera Cruz the French soon showed that they had never intended to be bound by the London convention. In the most summary manner France presented her ultimatum to Mexico in the shape of a claim for twenty-seven million dollars: twelve millions were demanded as an indemnity for injuries that French subjects claimed to have suffered, but France would not deign to itemize the claims; and the remaining fifteen millions were for government bonds which the revolutionary Clerical government of Miramon had given to Jecker, a Swiss banker, for seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars in cash, by the aid of which it had been hoped that the constitutional government of Juarez might be overthrown. Payment being an impossibility, as the French well knew long before, they began a forced march toward the City of Mexico. On approaching Puebla the vanguard lost two thousand men. At the town itself they met with a most humiliating repulse. Thereupon large reinforcements were called for, and in a few months the French army amounted to about thirty-five thousand men. In May, 1863, Puebla finally fell into the hands of the French, and early in June they triumphantly entered the Mexican capital.

It was plain that Napoleon intended to overthrow the Mexican republic. The commander of the expedition, General Forey, and the French Minister, Saligny, took matters into their own hands. They selected a junta, or provisional government, composed of thirty-five members, who chose three Regents as an executive head, and later named an Assembly of Notables of two hundred and fifteen persons. With hardly an exception, the members

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of this improvised government were enemies of the constitutional President, Juarez. In accordance with the programme, the Assembly met in July, 1863, and without debate, and with only two voices in the negative, voted that an empire should be established; that the throne should be offered to the Archduke Maximilian of Austria, brother of Francis Joseph; and that if he should decline it, the Emperor of the French should be asked to fill the vacancy. Maximilian expressed his willingness to accept the offer if a Mexican plebiscite should result in his favor, and if he could obtain from other sources guaranties of the protection of Mexico. During the next year the imperial army, composed mainly of French soldiers, forced many of the smaller cities and villages of Mexico to surrender to the new government. By the spring of 1864 all doubt had been settled in the mind of Maximilian, and his scruples in favor of a national plebiscite were satisfied without an actual vote. On the day Maximilian finally accepted the crown, April 10, 1864, a convention was entered into between France and the new imperial government, by which Mexico agreed to pay the French claims and the past and future cost of the intervention, under certain conditions; and France practically guaranteed to Maximilian her military protection.¹ In June, 1864, Maximilian I. made a brilliant entry into the City of Mexico. His pious and sentimental mind was filled with generous thoughts, for he really hoped to regenerate his adopted country. But his throne rested on the shoulders of the French troops.

It was late in March, 1862, when the Department of State received its first definite information of the aims of the French. This was about the time McClellan com-

¹ 8 *Dip. Cor.*, 1864, 74, 75.

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menced his Peninsular campaign. If Seward had then taken a firm and defiant attitude toward France, Napoleon would have foreseen that his own expedition and the cause of the Union could not both succeed. He might have turned the scales either way, and we know what his decision would have been. However, had Seward preserved silence, it would have been very difficult for him to object later. See how diplomatically he chose a middle course

"You will intimate to Mr. Thouvenel that rumors of this kind [that France is a party to the scheme to 'subvert the republican American system in Mexico'] have reached the President and awakened some anxiety on his part. You will say that you are not authorized to ask explanations, but you are sure that if any can be made, which will be calculated to relieve that anxiety, they will be very welcome, insomuch as the United States desire nothing so much as to maintain a good understanding and the most cordial relations with the government and the people of France.

"It will hardly be necessary to do more in assigning your reasons for this proceeding on your part than to say that we have more than once, and with perfect distinctness and candor, informed all the parties to the alliance that we cannot look with indifference upon any armed European intervention for political ends in a country situated so near and connected with us so closely as Mexico."

Thurlow Weed understood both the requirements and Seward's aims, and wrote from Paris, in April, 1862: "Your despatch on Mexican matters breaks no eggs. It makes a record, and there, I hope, you are at rest." The immediate danger was avoided without closing the question. Subsequently Seward made it plain why he desired to defer the discussion: "Nations no more than individuals can wisely divide their attention upon many subjects at one time." While France was frequently interrogated, and was permitted to infer that Seward

¹ Instructions to Dayton, March 31, 1862. Doc. 100, p. 218.
² Seward, 85.

³ *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 471.

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thought her avowals and actions not altogether consistent, he never seemed to question her sincerity. Not knowing what the United States could afford to risk for Mexico, he discreetly awaited events.

However, the aims of the conquering French army were notorious. Because Seward knew that the Mexicans would not choose Maximilian, he must have seen that the French were intending to violate the Monroe doctrine. In April, 1863, Dayton reported that Drouyn de Lhuys had informed him that the French troops expected to take the capital, establish order there, repay themselves for debts, expenses, etc.; that sources of Mexican wealth, such as mines, if properly worked, would meet all claims. Dayton thought that this showed the intended policy, and he was right; that if France kept both sides of the account it would require long possession before the profits of the adventure would fully settle the balance.¹ A little later he was assured that there was no intention to colonize Mexico or to occupy Sonora or any other section permanently. Dayton then told Drouyn de Lhuys that the government of the United States would not interfere in any way with the war between France and Mexico.² Seward approved what Dayton had said, and pronounced it "as truthful as it was considerate and proper."³ A private and unpublished letter of September 9, 1863, to John Bigelow, said :

"We are too intent on putting down our own insurrection, and avoiding complications which might embarrass us, to seek for occasion of dispute with any foreign power. I do not know, but I think it reasonable to presume, that the Emperor finds the difficulty of his administration sufficient to employ him, without inviting any unnecessary difficulty with the United States. I may be wrong in the latter view.

¹ 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 656.

² 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 99.

³ *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 665.

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But, if I am, there is likely to be time enough for us to change our course after discovering the error."¹

The great advantage of Seward's attitude was manifested by the result of an interview between Dayton and Drouyn de Lhuys in September, 1863. The report had been widely circulated in France that the United States only awaited the termination of their domestic troubles to drive the French out of Mexico. "The French naturally conclude that if they are to have trouble with us, it would be safest to choose their own time," Dayton wrote.² With this idea in view, the Emperor had inquired of his Minister of Foreign Affairs if the United States had made a formal protest against the action of France in Mexico. But as no such protest had been made, and as the United States had not assumed a position that was positively hostile, Napoleon saw no need of changing his policy.

Toward the end of the year 1863 Drouyn de Lhuys intimated that the United States would early recognize the propriety of such action would be agreeable to France and would hasten the withdrawal of her troops. Seward's answer must have been as unsatisfactory as it was adroit. He said that the United States were determined to err, if at all, on the side of strict neutrality in the war between France and Mexico; that they were still of the opinion that the permanent establishment of a foreign or monarchical government in Mexico would be found neither easy nor desirable; and that the United States could not do otherwise than leave the destinies of Mexico in the keeping of her own people, and recognize their sovereignty and independence in whatever form they themselves should choose.³

¹ Bigelow MSS. This designation will be used for citations from many unpublished letters that Seward wrote to John Bigelow, who generally gave the author access to them.

² *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 699.

³ *2 Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 726.

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These statements were doubtless intended to convey the impression that the United States would not invoke the Monroe doctrine, which had already been violated. The most Seward did at this time was to point out that if France should adopt a course in Mexico adverse to American opinions and sentiments, it "would probably scatter seeds which would be fruitful of jealousies, which might ultimately ripen into collision between France and the United States and other American republics."

Congress and the newspapers could not understand the wisdom of employing all the resources of the nation against the almost invincible Confederacy before seeking formidable enemies abroad. They had great contempt for what they styled Seward's cowardice. In January, 1864, McDougal, of California, introduced in the Senate a series of resolutions declaring it to be the duty of the government of the United States to require France to remove her armed forces from Mexico; and the resolutions further called for the negotiation of a treaty by which the government should engage to prevent the possible interposition of any of the European powers in Mexican affairs.¹ In a confidential, unpublished despatch of February 8, 1864, Seward foretold that there would

"be a legislative demonstration against the establishment of a foreign government and a monarchy in Mexico. Only the influence of executive moderation holds the popular action under restraint now. The President thinks you should know these facts. But you are left the free exercise of your discretion, how and when to use them."

Fortunately some prudent men in the Senate caused these resolutions to be laid on the table. But in April the House declared unanimously that it would not ac-

¹ 2 *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 711. See *ibid.*, 713, for a positive denial of meditating a future war against France.

² McPherson's *History of the Rebellion*, 348, 349.

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with the policy of the United States to acknowledge a monarchical government erected on the ruins of a republican government in America under the auspices of European power.¹ Dayton reported that the European press inferred from this that either France or the United States would soon have to make a change of policy. When he called on Drouyn de Lhuys, shortly after the report of these resolutions reached Paris, the first words of the French Minister were: "Do you bring us peace, or bring us war?"

Seward had already taken the precaution to inform Congress that the extravagant opinions entertained at the time were "not in harmony with the policy of neutrality, forbearance, and consideration which the President has faithfully pursued."² After the passage of the resolution, Seward caused the French government to be reminded that the question of the attitude toward Mexico was an executive one, unless two-thirds of both

¹ McPherson, 349.

² April 22, 1864. MS.

³ *Dip. Cor.*, 1864, 76.

January 12, 1864. MS. In an unpublished confidential letter of January 5, 1864, to Bigelow, he wrote:

"The war of the French against Mexico is, of course, a source of continued irritation. The House of Representatives responds promptly to a popular impulse, which is as strong as it is universal. Nevertheless, it will be seen in this case, as it was in the affair of the *Trent*, that the nation can act with all the circumspection and deliberation which a regard to its condition of distraction, civil war, and social confusion requires.

"I might say to you confidentially, if it were entirely wise to say anything unnecessary, that those who are most impatient for the removal of European and monarchical designs in Mexico might well be content to abide the effects which must result from the ever-increasing isolation of the American people westward and southward. Five, ten, twenty years hence, Mexico will be opening herself as fully to American immigration as Montana and Idaho are now. European power can then maintain an army in Mexico capable of resisting the martial and moral influences of emigration!"—Bigelow

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houses should formulate a different policy; that the President did not then contemplate a departure from the course hitherto pursued; and that in any case France would be seasonably apprised of any change.¹ But for such declarations as these—in opposition to the prevalent opinion of the people of the United States—it is practically certain that Napoleon would have felt compelled to strike at the Federal government while it was weak, and while he was still master of affairs at home and in Mexico.

Seward's purpose during the years 1863 and 1864 was to avoid the active disfavor of France, but still to keep her informed that her intervention in the affairs of Mexico was not approved. The only heed he gave to the popular clamor against Napoleon was to make special efforts to prevent it from disturbing his plans, while he held firmly to his belief that the destinies of the American continent were not to be permanently controlled by political arrangements made in the capitals of Europe. John Bigelow, knowing the possible opposition to the Emperor that might be encouraged in France, but unable, at so great a distance, to see all the complications elsewhere, had urged Seward to be more outspoken in regard to both Mexico and the ships. In an unpublished letter marked "private, unofficial, and confidential," part of which has already been quoted,² the Secretary replied, May 21, 1864:

"I think, with deference to your opinion, which I always hold in great respect, that, with our land and naval forces in Louisiana retreating before the rebels instead of marching toward Mexico, this is not the most suitable time we could choose for offering idle menaces to the Emperor of France. We have compromised nothing, surrendered nothing, and I do not propose to surrender anything. But why should we gasconade about Mexico when we are in a struggle for our own life? You tell me of help

¹ 8 *Dip. Cor.*, 1865, 356, 357.

² See *ante*, p. 393.

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legislative chambers of France, and support in the
of Paris. I appreciate and am grateful for both, but
would they avail us if we should give the French
ment a ground to appeal, in the midst of our civil
to French and English jealousy against the United
? It would avail us just as much as German re-
anism avails now in Prussia to hold in check the
and Count Bismarck. On the other hand, do you
e the American people are in a temper to forgive
ministration that should suffer the country to fall
foreign war upon a contingent and merely specula-
ue like that of the future of Mexico?"

erty politicians," he wrote again, June 6, 1864, "think
he Mexican question affords them a fulcrum, and
them willing to work their lever reckless of dangers
country. Can anybody mistake the isolated and
condition of England? Can anybody doubt that
its from making foreign questions the basis of parti-
tion? So far we have escaped only this complication
great trial. I hope we shall continue to steer clear

for the summer of 1864 the fortunes of Napoleon
poor Maximilian did not brighten. The Liberal
in Mexico had confiscated most of the enormous
sions of the Catholic Church. It was the Cleri-
ty that had brought about foreign intervention,
the confident expectation that thereby the lost
of the church could be regained. Probably Na-
had given assurances encouraging this expecta-
but the French found that much of this property
len into the hands of their fellow-citizens. Max-
was pre-eminently a Catholic prince; and, it was
d, he would champion the cause of his church.
sincerely sought to conciliate all parties. As a
he received the full support of none. Many of
ricals were soon denouncing Napoleon and Max-
as bitterly as were any of the Liberals, and the

¹ Both letters are in the Bigelow MSS.

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Liberals would never yield to an emperor. Moreover, neither Maximilian nor any of his trusted friends possessed executive ability. Able men would have organized a new financial system, but Maximilian had to depend upon the French budget as much as upon the French troops. Despite all these and other threatening signs, Napoleon was not free to abandon Maximilian. In an unpublished part of a despatch of March 17, 1865, to Bigelow, Seward said: "I remain, however, of the opinion I have often expressed, that even this vexatious Mexican question in the end will find its solution without producing a conflict between the United States and France. The future of Mexico is neither an immediate nor even a vital question for either the United States or France. For both of them it is a foreign affair, and therefore time and reason may be allowed their full influence in its settlement."

The conclusion of the Civil War removed the greatest elements of danger for the United States. If Seward's declarations had been merely a matter of prudence, he would have changed his attitude with the return of peace. For four years he had been very successfully practising the art of diplomacy with France. During most of that time he kept her so perfectly balanced between her hopes and her fears in regard to the United States that she let many a good opportunity slip; and by philosophizing about "the traditional friendship" between the two countries he helped to prevent Great Britain and France from forming closer relations. This was much, but he knew that the criterion of his powers as a diplomatist would be to get the French out of Mexico peaceably. It was known that Napoleon was pledged to support Maximilian for a much longer time than had as yet elapsed. To desert his puppet now would be not only faithless and expensive, but it would also give the French

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Republicans a chance to heap ridicule and contempt upon the Emperor.¹ It was clear to Seward that threats, or summary proceedings along the Rio Grande, might easily be represented to the French people as an insult to themselves, and then the whole nation would rise in its anger, and Napoleon would cover the failure of his original schemes and make himself popular in a patriotic war.

So, on June 3, 1865, Seward wrote to John Bigelow, who had become Dayton's successor:

"The policy of the administration of the late President, in respect to France and Mexico, is well known to Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys. It was fully and frankly made known by communications from this department. You are authorized to inform Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys, that that policy has undergone no change by the change of administration, but will be continued as heretofore."

This was a very important announcement. For more than a year there had been a growing sentiment in favor of turning the veterans of the Civil War against the French troops in Mexico. The idea appealed to a sense of resentment against Europeans, which was common among both politicians and military men. Already some United States soldiers, after their release from service, had crossed into Mexico and joined Juarez's republican forces; but Seward believed that in no event could the enlistments amount to a sufficient number of men to give ground for the least uneasiness to either France or Mexico."² Apparently he expected to pursue his course without serious opposition, but he had not yet reckoned with Lieutenant-General Grant.

Grant, as he himself wrote in his *Memoirs*, had looked upon the European invasion of Mexico "as a direct act of war against the United States by the powers

¹ 8 *Dip. Cor.*, 1864, 74, 75, quotes the convention between Napoleon and Maximilian.

² Bigelow MSS.

³ *Ibid.*

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engaged, and supposed, as a matter of course, that the United States would treat it as such when their hands were free to strike."¹ He considered this task so much a part of his duties as practical head of the army that it never occurred to him to get distinct and definite instructions in regard to it any more than on his other important plans. Sheridan was sent to southwestern Texas to subdue the Confederates still holding out under Kirby Smith, and to menace the imperial forces in Mexico by distributing United States soldiers and munitions of war along the Rio Grande.² Stranger still were Grant's instructions of July 25, 1865, to Sheridan about the part to be played by General Schofield.³ Schofield was given a leave of absence for twelve months, on order, as he himself said, "to organize in Mexican territory an army corps under commissions from the government of Mexico, the officers and soldiers to be taken from the Union and Confederate forces, who were reported to be eager to enlist in such an enterprise."⁴ The plan was that veterans of the Civil War, when mustered out, should cross the Rio Grande with their arms and equipments as well as with the ordnance and ordnance stores along that river, and join Schofield's standard for the purpose of expelling the French. Schofield believed that all the members of the government expected that for this would be necessary to settle the question with France.

¹ 2 Grant's *Memoirs*, 545. Sumner's account of Grant's ideas and plans is given in 4 Pierce, 255:

² 2 Grant's *Memoirs*, 546. "General Grant was not content with the frequent and earnest expression of his opinion in regard to what the action of his government should be; he ordered troops to the frontier, not only for readiness to march into Mexico in case war should be declared, but apparently to provoke hostilities, and thus make war between the two countries unavoidable."—McCulloch *Men and Measures of Half a Century*, 387.

³ Text in Schofield's *Forty-six Years in the Army*, 380-82.

⁴ Schofield, 380.

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It is all but certain that this expectation would have been realized within a few months, perhaps within a few weeks, if Seward had not cleverly disorganized the whole undertaking by flattering its chief into believing that his services were needed at once in the field of diplomacy. Schofield was requested to meet Seward at Cape May. There the soldier, after four years of the hard fare of war, could look out upon the ocean and dream of important interviews and banquets at the Tuileries. The perfection of the strategy is shown by the fact that Schofield did not think it remarkable that such shrewd diplomatists as Seward and Bigelow needed his aid. And Seward was supposed to be perfectly serious when he said: "I want you to get your legs under Napoleon's mahogany and tell him he must get out of Mexico."¹ Schofield was kept waiting for more than two months and then sent off to Paris, where he was allowed to remain and do some feasting in the outer circle of court and military society until May, 1866, when, as he unsuspectingly and solemnly says: "The condition of the Franco-Mexican question at the time of my return from Europe gave no further occasion for my offices in either of the ways which had been contemplated in behalf of Mexico."² The soldier had done no harm in diplomacy, where he had no important authority; Seward and Bigelow had been laughing in their sleeves.³

¹ Schofield, 385.

² Schofield, 393.

³ For Sheridan's views as to how Seward lost a "golden opportunity" for war, and as to "the slow and poky methods of our State Department," see his 2 *Personal Memoirs*, 214-17.

Parts of some of Seward's unpublished private letters to Bigelow show not only how little assistance the two diplomatists needed, but also how careful Seward had been to keep the question within the domain of negotiation:

June 17, 1865: "Circumstances indicate a growing disposition in some quarters of the country to find or make a *casus belli* with a view to the political situation in Mexico. I think it would be well for you

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Seward had meantime become more peremptory with France. In a long despatch of September 6, 1865, he said, in substance: For many years there has been a traditional friendship between France and the United States that has been cherished quite regardless of political conditions in either country. The United States favor republican institutions on the American continent. French intervention in Mexico has been antagonistic to this position and has tended to prevent the republican sovereignty of Mexico from asserting itself. France and the United States have armies confronting each other on the Mexican border; and although the two forces have

in an informal and confidential manner to let the French government understand the great importance, as we think, of the practice on their part, of the most just and friendly disposition towards the United States by the French authorities in Mexico, as well as in the shaping of French policy towards that country.

"Prompt and punctual attention to this subject will be of essential importance."

July 1, 1865: "Parties are organizing here for ulterior political action. It is unmistakable that immediate enforcement of negro suffrage upon the states which rebelled, by the conquering loyal states, is to be the platform of one, and decided and initiatory action toward France in regard to Mexico another."

July 14, 1865: "I need hardly point out the movements made here indicative of a defiant spirit about Mexican affairs. I may, however, properly tell you that they find much favor in the army, and you are well aware how popular the army deservedly is at this moment. Congress will soon be in session and then we may expect debates and party organizations.

"Fully informed you will act wisely and discreetly."

July 24, 1865: "There are unmistakable signs that the Mexican embroglio is to be made a subject for excitement and party contentions. Nothing will satisfy the nervous but vehemence on the part of this government. The complications grow more formidable every day."

August 7, 1865: "I hope that you clearly foresee what is certain to be the temper of Congress and of political conventions in this country in regard to Mexico, and that you do not in any way withhold the information from Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys."

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heretofore practised prudence, "a time seems to have come when both nations may well consider whether the permanent interests of international peace and friendship do not require the exercise of a thoughtful and serious attention to the political questions to which I have thus adverted."¹

On November 6th another step in advance was taken. Seward declared that Maximilian's government was in direct antagonism to the fundamental policy and principle of that of the United States.. Therefore, he said, they were not prepared to recognize it then, or to promise to recognize any similar government later.² It is not strange that the French Minister of Foreign Affairs remarked, after Bigelow had finished reading the despatch, that its contents gave him neither pleasure nor satisfaction.³ Still Napoleon could not accept this as final and withdraw, for the stronger the language of the United States the stronger the moral demand upon the Emperor of the French to support his puppet.

Before the end of 1865 practically everybody in the United States agreed that French intervention must soon end, and a despatch of December 16th announced:

"It has been the President's purpose that France should be respectfully informed upon two points, namely:

First. That the United States earnestly desire to continue to cultivate sincere friendship with France.

Second. That this policy would be brought into imminent jeopardy unless France could deem it consistent with her interest and honor to desist from the prosecution of armed intervention in Mexico, to overthrow the domestic republican government existing there, and to establish upon its ruins the foreign monarchy which has been attempted to be inaugurated in the capital of the country."

This was as plain as if he had written: *Withdraw or*

¹ 3 Dip. Cor., 1865, 412.

² 2 Dip. Cor., 1865, 422.

³ 3 Dip. Cor., 1865, 422.

⁴ 3 Dip. Cor., 1865, 490.

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fight; yet it was not said in a way to precipitate a conflict.

There was great excitement in France early in 1866 owing to the Mexican question. Some likened the commotion to that that preceded the revolution of 1789.¹ Drouyn de Lhuys reviewed with circumspection the course that France had pursued; and, as a condition of the withdrawal of French troops, he once more tried to get the United States to recognize Maximilian.² On February 12th Seward replied, with great care, making what Bigelow privately described as a very happy combination of the *suaviter in modo* with the *fortiter in re*; he held his ground firmly but diplomatically.³

After considering the matter for several weeks, Napoleon concluded that he could not afford to risk a war with the United States. On April 5, 1866, *Le Moniteur*, his official organ, announced that the French troops would evacuate Mexico in three detachments—namely, in November, 1866, and in March and November, 1867.⁴ Thus the question of French intervention in Mexico seemed to be settled.

When the time came for the departure of the first third of the French army, Seward was informed by the American Minister in Paris that Napoleon had decided to postpone the withdrawal of all his troops until the

¹ 3 *Dip. Cor.*, 1865, 807.

² 3 *Dip. Cor.*, 1865, 805 ff.

³ 3 *Dip. Cor.*, 1865, 813 ff. In a private letter of February 14, 1866, about this despatch, Seward said:

"What I write is approved by the President. The Congress of the United States is sufficiently imbued with a conviction of the necessity of governmental action on the subject of the French intervention.

"What has recently been written by me on that subject to Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys is marked by a degree of decision which Congress will approve, while I trust it is expressed in a manner that ought to be deemed conciliatory and respectful. I shall look with much solicitude to the reply which may now be expected from France."

—Bigelow MSS.

⁴ 3 *Dip. Cor.*, 1865, 827.

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spring of 1867.¹ Seward replied by cable, under date of November 23, 1866:

"We cannot acquiesce—

"First. Because the term 'next spring,' as appointed for the entire evacuation, is indefinite and vague.

"Second. Because we have no authority for stating to Congress and to the American people that we have now a better guarantee for the withdrawal of the whole expeditionary force in the spring than we have heretofore had for a withdrawal of a part in November."

And third, in substance, because such delay would seriously conflict with the plans of the United States.²

Napoleon intended to withdraw his troops, but he wished to postpone their departure as long as possible, in the interest of French securities and to ward off the disgrace of his own unscrupulous scheme to use Maximilian and the Mexicans. In the hope of gaining time, at least, he proposed that a Mexican provisional government be formed to the exclusion of both Maximilian and Juarez. But Seward had repeatedly declined to sever the friendly relations of the United States with Juarez's government, although it had long been a fugitive. During the early part of 1866 Sheridan had supplied the Mexican Liberals with as many as thirty thousand muskets, and Juarez had won back most of the northeastern part of Mexico.³ Seward now knew that he could safely refuse to carry on further negotiations for delay; and the avoidance of war he wisely thought more important than a display of enthusiasm and ~~pomp~~. So, on January 18, 1867, he positively declined Napoleon's proposition.⁴ Napoleon then gave up hope. In February, 1867, the French evacuated the City of Mexico, and intervention quickly came to an end.

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1866, 364.

² Sheridan's *Memoirs*, 224.

³ *Ibid.*, 366, 367.

⁴ *1 Dip. Cor.*, 1867, 218.

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In a few weeks Maximilian's forces were routed. The Emperor and two of the most prominent of his Mexican supporters were soon tried by court-martial, and on June 19, 1867, they were shot. Seward endeavored to obtain clemency for Maximilian, but the passions of the army seem to have prevented Juarez from commuting the sentence.¹

Meantime, in March, 1866, Seward learned that Austria was about to permit four thousand volunteers to be enlisted for the army of Maximilian. John Lothrop Motley, United States Minister at Vienna, was thereupon requested to make known to Austria that such permission would be viewed with displeasure by the government of the United States.² On April 6th, after having received fuller information, Seward instructed Motley that

"in the event of hostilities being carried on hereafter in Mexico by Austrian subjects, under the command or with the sanction of the government of Vienna, the United States will feel themselves at liberty to regard those hostilities as constituting a state of war by Austria against the Republic of Mexico; and in regard to such war . . . the United States could not engage to remain as silent or neutral spectators."³

On the 16th, and after it was understood that only about two thousand were to be sent, he notified Motley that "the despatch of any troops from Austria for Mexico" "while the subject remains under consideration" would be regarded "as a matter of serious concern" by this government.⁴ When, a few days later, Motley showed that he misapprehended Seward's position, or halted in view of the contrast between the different instructions, Seward informed him that that was

¹ 2 *Dip. Cor.*, 1867, 411-20.

² 3 *Dip. Cor.*, 1865, 833.

³ 3 *Dip. Cor.*, 1865, 831, 832.

⁴ 3 *Dip. Cor.*, 1865, 837.

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a question not to be discussed, and that if the Austrian government should persist in its course, he would be expected to retire from Vienna.¹ On May 20, 1866, but two months after Seward first took up the problem of Austria's giving aid to intervention in Mexico, Motley was informed by the Austrian government that, "in consideration of all the . . . circumstances, the necessary measures have been taken to prevent the departure of the volunteers lately enlisted for Mexico."² Here was summary diplomacy; and the circumstances fully warranted it.

One of the striking facts connected with the negotiations about intervention in Mexico is that the Monroe doctrine, though constantly appealed to at the time by the sensational newspapers and the politicians, seems not once to have been mentioned in any official despatch from the United States government. France violated the doctrine continuously for five years. But Seward knew that it was no part of international law; that it had no authority of its own, and no claim even to consideration except where it was used as a general term to express a protest against European interference that endangered substantial and vital interests of the United States. Foreign nations would yield to it only in proportion as it was rational and as they feared the military strength ready to support it. Seward was not as wise as we think if he did not see that all the reason of the Monroe doctrine would be equally strong and even more impressive if stated *ad hoc* in his own words, and without reference to the very different circumstances of the previous half-century.

This much is certain: to Seward belongs the chief

¹ 3 *Dip. Cor.*, 1865, 838.

² *Ibid.*, 845.

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credit for expelling those who were violating the Monroe doctrine, for restoring republicanism in Mexico, and for averting a war with France that might have been no less terrible than the Civil War, and might even have led to a renewal of that terrible conflict.

CHAPTER XLI

SEWARD'S PART IN RECONSTRUCTION, 1865-69

It is hardly conceivable that any leader except Lincoln could have conquered the difficulties of the period of reconstruction. And it is possible that all the prestige and confidence he had earned by his tact, philanthropy, and perseverance might not have enabled him to direct a system of thorough reconciliation. The relations between those that had been enemies in battle, and even between the ex-master and the ex-slave, were to be less difficult to adjust than the antagonisms between radicals and conservatives, between scheming, unscrupulous politicians and sullen, brutal men that lived to obstruct progress and satisfy old prejudices. Lincoln consistently maintained that no state had withdrawn from the Union, although most of the inhabitants in some of the states were in organized insurrection against the Federal government.¹ The state governments of Louisiana and Arkansas had been reorganized under the President's authorization that the work might begin as soon as one-tenth of the number of their voting population in 1860 became loyal; but Congress had withheld its approval by failing to admit delegations from those states. At the Hampton Roads conference Lincoln expressed the opinion that as soon as the rebellion ceased the states ought to be allowed to exercise their normal powers,²

¹ Dunning's *Essays on the Civil War and Reconstruction*, 65 ff.

² 10 Nicolay and Hay, 122, 123.

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and he promised to act with great liberality toward the Confederates. A few days after the surrender at Appomattox the administration decided that reconstruction should begin by the extension of the functions of the different departments to the states lately in revolt. Lincoln expected that the citizens of the respective states would soon conduct the state governments, although they might at first do it badly.¹

— Seward's wishes were not less generous. Seven months before the end of the war he said that he looked for propositions for a restoration of the Union to come from citizens and states not under Confederate control, and he added :

"All the world knows that so far as I am concerned, and, I believe, so far as the President is concerned, all such applications will receive just such an answer as it becomes a great, magnanimous, and humane people to grant to brethren who have come back from their wanderings to seek a shelter in the common ark of our national security and happiness."²

In his opinion slavery was "the only element of discord among the American people," and that being once removed, he was sure it would not be the fault of the administration if a period of peace and harmony did not prevail.³ Some remarks at Hampton Roads showed that he expected the South would be treated with kindness, and he objected to the inference that the United States demanded unconditional submission.⁴

¹ 3 Seward, 275, 288.

² 5 Works, 504.

³ Speech at Auburn, November 7, 1864, 5 Works, 514.

⁴ Campbell's MS. account of the conference says that in summing up the conclusions Hunter had inferred that there was nothing left for the Confederate States but unconditional submission. "Mr. Seward remarked that they [the President and himself] had not used the word submission or any word that implied humiliation to the States, and begged that it should not be noted."

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But it fell to Andrew Johnson to say the decisive word as to reconstruction. Johnson was a crude and sinewy specimen of a self-made man. Born a "poor white," he owed much of his advancement in politics to the favor with which the common people regarded his inherited prejudices against the highest class in the South. He felt, as another Southerner said, that the Confederate leaders had inaugurated "a rich man's war but a poor man's fight." He remained in the United States Senate after his state passed an ordinance of secession; and subsequently, as military governor of Tennessee, he reorganized a loyal state government in harmony with Lincoln's aims. His valuable services as a southern unionist and a Democrat led to his nomination for the vice-presidency. The whole Republican party was committed to the theory that the states were still in the Union; for, otherwise, how could they have favored Johnson, whose state was officially a part of the Confederacy? His courage and pugnacity were well known; but it was not yet fully realized that he was wholly lacking in the qualities that made Lincoln great. Johnson's intentions were good, but it was his acts that were to be influential. It was very unfortunate, even if accidental, that his inauguration as Vice-President was marked by inebriation and a meandering, egotistical harangue. Within a few days after he became President his public remarks showed that thoughts of his rise from a humble origin and of the necessity of punishing traitors were uppermost in his mind. The North blushed for his dull egotism and the South feared that he might be very revengeful.

Long before the iron frame was removed or the splints and bandages could be taken off, Seward was eager to return to his work. Nearly a month elapsed before he was able to attend a Cabinet-meeting, even when it took place in his own house; and then "his immovable arm

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and stiffened jaw rendered him almost incapable of taking part in the examination of papers or the discussion of questions.¹ He seems to have had no thought of retiring from the Department of State. The diplomatist's work is likely to be hardest before and after war. Seward's undertakings were necessarily far from complete. The two most important questions of long standing—French intervention in Mexico and Great Britain's alleged violations of neutrality—were still unsettled, and they were only a small part of the difficulties and projects in foreign relations that he was anxious to bring to a successful conclusion.² He rightly believed, also, that his services were never more needed in the department. As a matter of course, he dreaded to think of the time when he should have no responsibility and but little influence in politics.

The opinions Johnson had expressed about treason and negro suffrage³ caused many persons to expect that his policy would differ radically from that of his predecessor. But a presidential order of May 9th—the day the Cabinet met at Seward's house—designed to re-establish the authority of the United States in Virginia, applied the policy that Lincoln's administration had lately decided on.⁴ Likewise the amnesty proclamation of May 29, 1865, closely followed Lincoln's of earlier date. It was almost a matter of course, owing to changing circumstances, that the oath prescribed by Johnson should make the recognition of emancipation more positive, and that the exceptions from this general pardon should be more numerous. Each proclamation excluded all persons that had violated their oaths of alle-

¹ 3 Seward, 281, 282.

² 4 Pierce, 253, 254, quotes Seward's remarks to Sumner.

³ 4 Pierce, 242, 243, 245.

⁴ McPherson's *Reconstruction*, 8; McCulloch's *Men and Measures of Half a Century*, 378.

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giance to the United States or had been conspicuous in the civil, the military, or the diplomatic service of the Confederacy. One feature peculiar to Johnson's policy was to preclude from amnesty all voluntary participants in the rebellion who possessed property estimated at the taxable value of over twenty thousand dollars.¹ Even the men in the excepted classes were promised that, on special application, clemency would be "liberally extended" to them as far as might be "consistent with the facts of the case and the peace and dignity of the United States." On the same day the President appointed a provisional governor for North Carolina and authorized him to arrange for a convention of loyal citizens chosen by persons that had been rehabilitated and were voters according to the constitution and laws in force in the state just previous to the passage of the ordinance of secession. The questions of suffrage and of eligibility to hold office were to be left to the convention or to the legislature, for the proclamation de-

¹ 2 Blaine's *Twenty Years of Congress*, 66 ff., 108, makes some very entertaining statements about Seward's influence in causing Johnson to change his idea of reconstruction. The only fault to be found with them is that they are chiefly assumption and imagination and tend to conceal the facts. No one has ever produced evidence showing that Johnson needed to be convinced that the work of reconstruction could be best directed by the executive department of the government. And before Seward was able to talk without great pain Johnson had begun to follow the course Lincoln had laid out for himself. So the President must either have changed his plans after merely a few words with Seward or have surrendered in advance, having heard of what Blaine called Seward's "faculty, in personal intercourse with one man or with a small number of men, of enforcing his own views and taking captive his hearers." Assuming that Johnson felt this magic in the beginning, one is left to wonder why that same magic was unable to prevent him from showing his prejudice against the wealthy class (2 Blaine, 74), or from making so sorry an exhibition of himself before the public, or from letting southern men "fasten their hold upon Mr. Johnson even to the exclusion of Mr. Seward." (2 Blaine, 109.)

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clared that that was a power the people of the several states had rightfully exercised from the foundation of the government. Before the middle of July all the other unorganized states were treated in the same way. Johnson was advancing by long strides, but his course was essentially the same as the one Lincoln had in prospect.¹

✓ The amnesty proclamation directed that the Secretary of State should have general supervision of the system of political pardons. Many men in the excepted classes made oral applications either at the department or at Seward's house. "They come to me," he wrote in August, 1865, "as if I were more inclined to tenderness than others, because I have been calm and cool under political excitement."² Many years later, William Henry Trescot described³ how Seward, with mock severity of voice and facial expression, answered his requests for the return of confiscated lands by playfully declaring that the ex-Confederate leaders must humble themselves before obtaining forgiveness. Then the Secretary entered into a pleasant conversation, and did all he could to aid the applicant. R. M. T. Hunter was a man toward whom one would not expect Seward to show any friendship. After Hunter was released as a prisoner of war, he visited Washington. Seward greeted him as if they had been life-long friends, and invited him to dinner. The Virginian found under his plate a pardon duly signed and sealed. It was typical of Seward's disposition to make friends of enemies, of his good-fellowship, and of his easy-going ways about matters that he regarded as of secondary importance.

During the New York campaign in the autumn of 1865 Weed and Raymond decided that Seward—although he had not yet recovered from his wounds—

¹ Dunning, 79 ff.

² 3 Seward, 293.

³ In conversation with the author.

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ought to address the public in defence of the President's policy, which was not gaining in popularity at the North. So it was arranged that while he was on a visit to Auburn a company of friends and neighbors should call, and that in reply to some remarks from a local clergyman, Doctor Hawley, the Secretary of State should express his opinions on the political situation. The speeches to be delivered were dictated in advance to the same stenographer. The programme was carried out, and Seward spoke from his own doorstep.¹

Of the method of reconstruction he said: "It is *the* plan which abruptly, yet distinctly, offered itself to the last administration . . . when the work of restoration was to begin; . . . it is the only possible plan which then or ever afterward could be adopted. . . . In the mean time, the executive and legislative authorities of Congress can do no more than discharge their proper functions of protecting the recently insurgent states from anarchy during the intervening period while the plan is being carried into execution."²

Many Republicans were beginning to doubt if the work of rehabilitation was not proceeding too rapidly to be safe and sincere. Seward's reply was:

"Certainly you must accept this proposed reconciliation, or you must propose to delay and wait until you can procure a better one. . . . Are you sure that you can procure a better reconciliation after prolonged anarchy, without employing force? Who will advocate the employment of force merely to hinder and delay, through prolonged anarchy, a reconciliation which is feasible and perfectly consistent with the Constitution? In what part of the Con-

¹ These statements are made on the authority of George R. Bishop. Mr. Bishop went to Auburn at the request of Henry J. Raymond and acted as Seward's stenographer for a few days.—Letter of March 10, 1896, to the author.

² 5 *Works*, 519.

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stitution is written the power to continue civil war against succumbing states, for ultimate political triumph? What would this be but, in fact, to institute a new civil war, after one had ended with the complete attainment of the lawful objects for which it was waged? . . . Congress and the President have a right to accept or even make war against any part of the people of the United States only under their limited power to suppress sedition and insurrection, and for that purpose only. What then? Must we give up the hope of further elevation of classes in the several states without any new guarantees for individual liberty and progress? By no means. Marching in this path of progress and elevation of masses is what we have been doing still more effectually in the prosecution of the war."¹

He was also sure that the plan already inaugurated "must and would be adopted," although turbulent or factious persons in one section, or manifestations of distrust or defiance in the other, might cause delay. The way to hasten the work was for the sections to trust each other.²

At first thought one wonders how Seward could have supposed that Johnson was capable of succeeding in so difficult an undertaking as reconstruction was even then known to be. Seward judged Johnson according to the good work he had done during the four years previous to 1865, whereas it is the bad work of the four years subsequent to 1865 that has given Johnson his place in history. However, Seward's estimate of the President was higher than ought to have been made by any one that had been intimately associated with him.³ Seward soon perceived that a storm was gathering.

¹ 5 Works, 521.

² 5 Works, 522.

³ "Except those of you who have been maimed or bereaved, have any of you suffered more of wrong, insult, and violence at the hands of those leaders than he [the President] has? Can we not forget where he can forgive? Are you aware that his terms of amnesty are far more rigorous than those which were offered by Abraham Lincoln? . . . And you ask: May not the President yet

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"The approach of Congress prognosticates trials of many sorts, from the ill-assortment of tempers and the absence of a spirit of conciliation, when conciliation is the interest and duty of all," he wrote, November 18, 1865. A week later he heard "the rumbling of congressional ambitions." "How to steer clear of the partisan and personal contentions of Congress" was his "chief responsibility." As Congress was assembling he wrote again: "Every wild thought and inconceivable jealousy is afloat. Interests of cupidity and ambition, mingled with passion and prejudice. The President is suspected of everything, and guilty of nothing."¹

Meantime the work of reconstruction had advanced so rapidly that its friends supposed it was almost complete. The conventions in the different states had repealed the ordinances of secession, abolished slavery, and repudiated war debts. Loyal legislatures had come into existence, and Senators and Representatives from the states of the late Confederacy were in Washington ex-

prove unfaithful to us? For myself, I laid aside partisanship, if I had any, in 1861, when the salvation of the country demanded that sacrifice. . . . Andrew Johnson laid aside, I am sure, whatever of partisanship he had at the same time. That noble act did not allow—but, on the other hand, it forbade—collusion by the friends of the Union with opponents of the policies of the war and of reconciliation which the government has found it necessary to pursue. . . . Patriotism and loyalty equally, however, require that fidelity in this case should be mutual. Be ye faithful, therefore, on your part, and, although the security I offer is unnecessary and superfluous, yet I will guarantee fidelity on his part. . . . Perhaps you fear the integrity of the man. I confess, with a full sense of my accountability, that among all the public men whom I have met or with whom I have been associated or concerned, in this or any other country, no one has seemed to me to be more wholly free from personal caprice and selfish ambition than Andrew Johnson; none to be more purely and exclusively moved in public action by love of country and good-will to mankind."—5 *Works*, 523.

¹ 3 Seward, 801, 802.

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pecting to see the doors of Congress open before them. On December 18th the Secretary of State issued a proclamation announcing that the XIII. Amendment had become a part of the Constitution. Eight of the states lately in rebellion were among those that ratified it.¹ Florida and Texas were unorganized, but it was expected that they would not long remain so. Reconstruction would then be complete, if Congress should admit all the delegations from the South.

Unfortunately the evidences of success were merely superficial. Beneath the surface nearly everything had progressed unsatisfactorily to the Republicans at the Capitol. The conventions had not referred their actions to the people for approval, as many Northerners thought should have been done. Since there were no longer any slaves, the number of members in the House of Representatives must be proportionate to the free population. But the suffrage had nowhere been extended to the freedmen. Therefore, the white voters in the South would have a much larger representation than the same number in the North. Then it was sarcastically asked: Do unionism and success owe this advantage and an immediate voice in legislation to treason and defeat! Several of the reconstructed legislatures soon enacted special laws to regulate the actions and status of the negroes. An extensive system of peonage, likely to affect a large portion of the ex-slaves, would have been the result if these so-called "black codes" had been tolerated. Although emancipation was not the purpose of the war, it had come as one of the results; and most of the Republican leaders considered that their party was nominally bound to give the negroes the same civil rights as white persons, while some of the radicals were already insisting on an equality of political rights. So

¹ Dunning, 82.

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large a majority in Congress had become thoroughly dissatisfied that, about the middle of December, 1865, a joint committee was appointed to inquire into the whole question of reconstruction.

Early in 1866 the President vetoed a bill to continue and enlarge the functions of the Freedmen's Bureau, which was designed especially to aid and protect ex-slaves. The veto message needlessly expressed the opinion that most of the states lately in rebellion were "entitled to enjoy their constitutional rights as members of the Union."¹ The Republicans were unable to pass the bill over the veto, but in a concurrent resolution they informed the President and the country that no Senator or Representative should be admitted from any state held to have been insurrectionary, until Congress should declare such state entitled to representation. In a public speech, on February 22, 1866, Johnson charged that there was an attempt on the part of Congress to consolidate the Republic and that that was as objectionable as its dissolution. He denounced Charles Sumner and Thaddeus Stevens personally, and spoke as if his own assassination had been suggested by his opponents. His words and acts excited the South with the vain belief that Congress must yield because it had no right to tax the states to which it refused a voice in legislation. Had his aim been to appear unwise and undignified, the speech would have been a perfect success.

On the same day Seward addressed a political meeting in New York city on the "Restoration of Union."² It was announced that many of his prominent political friends—such as Thurlow Weed, William M. Evarts, Hamilton Fish, E. D. Morgan, R. M. Blatchford, and Moses H. Grinnell—were in sympathy with him. This

¹ McPherson's *Reconstruction*, 72.

² *5 Works*, 529-40.

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indicated that a serious effort was to be made to build up a new party or faction to support the administration. Unlike Johnson, Seward knew that personalities are always unprofitable. He now—as in December, 1860—declared that there was nothing very serious about the political situation. The Union had been saved. According to his metaphor, the ship had passed from tempest and billows to within the verge of a safe harbor, and had yet to pass merely some small reefs; and the dispute was only a difference of opinion between pilots. He was confident that “there never was and never can be any successful process for the restoration of the Union and harmony among the states, except the one with which the President has avowed himself satisfied.” “Say what you will or what you may, the states are already organized, in perfect harmony with our amended national Constitution, and are in earnest co-operation with the Federal government. It would require an imperial will, an imperial person, and imperial powers greater than the Emperor of France possesses, to reduce any one of these states with the consent of all the other states, to what you term a territorial condition.” Therefore, he pronounced the concurrent resolution to be “not a plan for reconstruction, but a plan for indefinite postponement and delay.” He thought it impracticable, vicious, and sure to fail. With confident optimism he saw nothing alarming about the condition of the freedmen. In ninety years there had been a change from slavery everywhere to freedom everywhere. Because the country was wiser than it was ninety years earlier, he had no fear that it would “lack the wisdom or the virtue to go right on and continue the work of melioration and progress, and perfect in due time the deliverance of labor from restrictions, and the annihilation of caste and class.” So, in regard to the veto of the Freedmen’s Bureau bill, he asked if the President ought

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to be denounced "for refusing, in the absence of any necessity, to occupy or retain, and to exercise powers greater than those which are exercised by any imperial magistrate in the world."

In March, 1866, the Civil Rights bill was sent to the President. It was designed to establish absolute equality of civil rights among all citizens of the United States.¹ The President returned the bill with a veto so strong and lucid that there was a suspicion that it had not come from the pen of the man whose speeches were generally meandering and dull in expression. But Congress was no more open to conviction than the President; it promptly passed the bill over the veto.

As yet relatively few Republicans were in favor of demanding full negro suffrage.² They proposed the XIV. Amendment for the purpose of equalizing representa-

¹ Dunning, 91 ff., discusses the bill in a clear and scholarly manner.

² In April, 1866, Professor Charles Eliot Norton and E. L. Godkin had a long interview with Seward. A careful report—written out immediately after the conversation—quotes Seward as saying:

"There ought to be no question about the readmission of the South. Those states are loyal, devoted, earnest, patriotic, humiliated, and repentant, eager to come back. Congress has no right to refuse them. It shows its distrust of the Constitution by its refusal. Every necessary preliminary has been complied with; the South has accepted every needful condition; there is nothing more to ask of it. It has as good a right to be represented in Congress as the North has, but Congress chooses to keep it out of the Union."

"The North has nothing to do with the negroes. I have no more concern for them than I have for the Hottentots. They are God's poor; they always have been and always will be so everywhere. They are not of our race. They will find their place. They must take their level. The laws of political economy will determine their position and the relations of the two races. Congress cannot contravene those. I am ready to leave the interests of the most intelligent white man to the guardianship of his state, and where I leave the interests of the white I am willing to trust the civil rights of the black. The South must take care of its own negroes as the North did and does. I was born a slave-holder; my state took away my

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tion in the House, to prevent ex-Confederate leaders from assuming control of political affairs in the South so as to interfere with congressional reconstruction, to guarantee the Federal debt incurred in the war, and to repudiate all Confederate obligations on the part of states or the nation. The Republicans were determined to make the acceptance of this amendment a precedent condition of admitting Senators and Representatives from the states of the late Confederacy.

On May 22, 1866, Seward spoke in Auburn on "The

slaves, and it did right, but I had to support them, and, indeed, have to support some of them up to this time.

"The North must get over this notion of interference with the affairs of the South. Some people talk about being afraid of the South if the southern members of Congress are allowed to take their seats. But what harm can they do? I am not afraid of them; I never was afraid of the South in my life, not even when it had power and wealth and united interests and patronage." . . .

. . . "I cannot imagine a base motive in politics any more than some men a base motive in domestic life. The states form one family. The South comes knocking at the door of the old home, and wants to be taken in, and will not the father hasten to open the door and welcome his repentant child?"

. . . "The South longs to come home now, sir. Those who refuse to take them into the family again are in my opinion guilty of a great crime. It may be a sublimated consideration, but I confess it has great weight with me, that if I could not forgive the enemies of my country as I forgive my own enemies, I could not have the hope that I might enter kingdom come. There is a want of charity in this refusal to forgive which is worse than the sins against which it is manifested. At this time the North is showing the most evil disposition, and I would rather go South, where they are behaving well, than to Massachusetts, where they are behaving ill, and showing so bad and unforgiving a temper.

"But all this trouble is going to pass over. Things will come out all right. The people will not consent to follow the lead of Congress, for they love the Union, and mean to have it whole again."

. . . "I have every confidence. I never held an opinion that was popular, and I have never failed to see the country come up to my opinions in time. This doctrine is not Massachusetts doctrine, but it

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Question of Reconciliation."¹ He argued that what the country needed was not reconstruction, but reconciliation, which would come as soon as the acting members of Congress admitted from the ex-Confederate states the members-elect that were loyal and qualified. The other leading contention was, that it could not be true, as charged, that the President was unfaithful to the party and its cardinal principles of public policy; for his disagreements with Congress on the Freedmen's Bureau bill, the Civil Rights bill, and one or two other subjects were "purely extraneous incidents, and have no necessary or real bearing upon the question of reconciliation." He maintained that the President had "neither sought, nor made, nor accepted any occasion for disagreeing from Congress, and that, so far as the purely incidental legislation to which I have referred is concerned, he is as loyal to the principles of the Union party and to the national cause as Congress or any of the members can claim to be." The speech was excellent in temper, but light and unconvincing in argument. It lacked the virility and enthusiasm of his senatorial days. In a single sentence he tried to answer the demand of the North that the negro should be given equal rights: "There is no soundness at all in our political system, if the personal or civil rights of each member of the state, white or black, free born or emancipated, native born or naturalized, are not more secure under the administration of [a] state government, than they could be under the administration of the national government." Such sentiments called out the severe criticism of men that had once regarded him as a champion of liberty and equality, who was to use Plymouth rock as "the ful-

is going to be the Massachusetts doctrine before long."—Published in the *New York Evening Post*, March 24, 1868.

¹ The speech was not printed in his *Works*, but was published in pamphlet form.

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crum by whose aid I may move the world—the moral world.”¹

After June, 1866, there was no hope of reconciliation between Congress and the President. Johnson was out of harmony with the Republican party, and his supporters must expect to find themselves allied with Democrats. It was not a pleasing prospect for a Republican Cabinet. William Dennison, the Postmaster-General, James Speed, the Attorney-General, and James Harlan, the Secretary of the Interior, withdrew in July.

Seward stood firmly and confidently by the policy that he had done much to shape. This was to be expected in view of all the circumstances. From the winter of 1860–61 he had almost continually counted on seeing the secessionists return speedily and in full repentance. He always cherished the amiable vanity of counting himself the most magnanimous of men; it was a part of his philosophy of practical politics, for the politician is concerned with the present and the future, not the past. Had he been ten years younger and in good physical condition, he would undoubtedly have been as energetic in the reconstruction movement as he had been in regard to military or diplomatic questions. But most of his old party friends were in sympathy with Congress; his personal misfortunes were many; he was crippled and scarred, and his vigor and ambition were not what they had been; and it was evident that his political career must end with his service in the Department of State. He was usually very charitable, and acted as if he had adopted for himself these immortal phrases of Lincoln's second inaugural address: “With malice toward none.

¹ The New York *Independent* of May 31, 1866, heaped ridicule upon him, and said: “Mr. Seward once earned honor by remembering the negro at a time when others forgot him; he now earns dishonor by forgetting the negro when the nation demands that the negro should be remembered.”

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with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds." He showed no rancor, even in the forced contest with Congress, although he considered it "agitated and stormy," and its debates "troubled, and its entire action convulsive."¹

In July, Tennessee, after ratifying the proposed XIV. Amendment, obtained admission to Congress for her delegation. Seward promptly assumed the rôle of the forgiving father and prepared a feast, which he described as follows:

"We had all the Tennessean Representatives last night to dinner; and they seemed to appreciate the attention. I had a calf served up in many ways, and they accepted it as 'returned prodigals.' The feast went off to the strains of martial airs from the band; and the two green-backed birds from the sunny South, added, by clamorous loquacity, to the hilarity of the occasion."²

The Republican majority in Congress was so large that there was no hope for the President's policy unless a strong conservative movement could be organized. The support of the Democrats could be counted on, because they would be benefited by it. The convention that met in Philadelphia in the middle of August was the result of an attempt to unite, for the purpose of an early restoration of the Union, about the same class of men to whom Seward and Weed had appealed in the winter of 1860-61 to prevent the dissolution of the Union. Henry J. Raymond, who wrote the address, first heard of the convention from Weed. Seward, Weed, and Raymond were at least its strongest supporters. The intention was not to found a new party to put the Democrats in power, but merely to develop sentiment in favor of admitting the ten states without further con-

¹ 3 Seward, 331.

² 3 Seward, 332.

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ditions; that is, to settle the difficulties between the sections as soon as possible. There was something noble in the faith, hope, and charity of the conception; but its utter lack of practical statesmanship was pitiable. The attempt to make a picturesque illustration of fraternity and forgiveness, by having delegates from Massachusetts and South Carolina enter the "Wigwam" arm in arm, was easily ridiculed. The North was not ready to trust the South; and it is strange that Seward and Weed did not know it, especially as the best interests of the country were opposed to such hasty forgiveness.

Near the end of August the President began the ill-fated campaign of stump-speaking that has gone into history as his famous "swinging-around-the-circle" trip, which Lowell humorously described as an "advertising tour of a policy in want of a party."¹ Seward had in advance some misgivings about the "excitements and fatigues" that it was likely to create. "But it is a duty to the President and to the country, though so many think it otherwise, and I shall go on with right good heart," he wrote.² The sight of a party consisting of the President of the United States, General Grant, Admiral Farragut, Seward, and others, ought to have impressed the multitudes that gathered in public places. In Philadelphia, New York city, and elsewhere in the East the crowds were not especially disrespectful, but in some of the western cities the President was railed at as if he were a mere brawling street-orator. At Cleveland he answered the hooting rabble in the manner of a man both mad and drunk, and he said, as he had often shown, that he cared nothing for dignity. This was a public disgrace. His ablest champion, the *New York Times*,³ criticised him for it, and reproved him

¹ *Political Essays*, 296.

² 3 Seward, 339.

³ September 7, 1866.

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for assuming that his opponents were enemies of the Union."

The rôle of the Secretary of State in this episode was pathetic. One of the wits of the time spoke of Seward's "new office of bear-leader."¹ Unfortunately he was very unsuccessful even in this task, for he could do little more than apologize for Johnson, and in a few commonplace sentences call upon the audiences to support the President in opposition to Congress. In New York he said: "I know you will give a certificate at the polls that the Union of the United States consists not of twenty-five states but of thirty-six."² At Niagara he told the crowd that Lincoln had been traduced when alive, but after his assassination all hearts inclined to the deepest sorrow; and it would be the same if Johnson should be taken off.³ To the citizens of Buffalo he stated the issue as follows:

"The question is between the President and the Congress. Of all that has been done, tell me what the Congressmen of the United States have done? Of all that has been done to bring us so near the consummation [of reconstruction], you see that nothing has been done that was not done through the direction, agency, activity, perseverance, and patriotism of Andrew Johnson, President of the United States. Will you stand by Congress? or will you stand by the President?"⁴

At the unveiling of the Douglas monument in Chicago, he told his hearers that it was one of the proudest political recollections of his life that, although he and Douglas had been what the world called enemies for all but six months of their acquaintance, Douglas's widow and children and friends had invited him to be the orator on this occasion.

¹ Lowell's *Political Essays*, 290.

² *New York Times*, August 30, 1866.

³ *Times*, September 2, 1866.

⁴ *Times*, September 4, 1866.

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"It proved this, namely: That Stephen A. Douglas was a great and generous man. Had he not been he could not have gone through ten years of opposition to me without leaving in my heart a pang or wound. It proved that I knew all the while that he was a patriot, and that he thought me to be one also. . . . I think that Stephen A. Douglas with Abraham Lincoln will live in the memory and homage of mankind with the Washingtons and Hamiltons of the Revolutionary age."¹

Until the summer of 1866 many of Seward's old friends believed that he had remained in Johnson's Cabinet mainly for the purpose of restraining the President; but after the absurd trip to the West—to eulogize Douglas and to exhibit Johnson—he became the object of the most cutting reproaches. The whole controversy about reconstruction had become an intensely bitter one between Johnson and the Republican leaders. Not a few of Seward's most ardent champions in earlier years depreciated both his acts and his character, and recalled certain doubtful incidents in his career to prove that his impulses and aims were now personal and resentful. One spoke of "the decline of his abilities and that dry-rot of the mind's nobler temper." "People are disgusted. Seward seems to have lost his wits as well as his principles," wrote another. Still another concluded an article thus: "Distrusted by his old friends, he will never be taken to the bosom of his old enemies. His trouble is not that the party to which he once belonged is without a leader, but that he wanders about, like a ghost—a leader without a party."² These were the severe judgments of opponents. Seward had not lost his principles, nor radically changed his opinions; but he was, indeed, the victim of strange circumstances: to adhere to the patriotic duty as well as ambition to keep control

¹ *Times*, September 7, 1866.

² 3 *Nation*, 234. Lowell's *Political Essays*, 292 ff., and 4 Pierce, 299, 308, give further illustrations of harsh criticism.



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of international difficulties, he had to stand at the President's right hand and to help defend a policy that was his own not less than the President's. Although this defence was often so calm and impersonal as to lack vigor and seem half-hearted, Seward was blamed for Johnson's follies and credited with much of the ability that was displayed in the President's communications to Congress. Seward's worst enemies could not have wished to see him humiliate himself as he did in the "swinging-around-the-circle" trip. It was a sad fact that Seward's popularity had gone and was never to return, to any considerable extent, while he remained in public life. The Quixotic expedition to the West was too much for Seward's frail condition; he became dangerously ill in Kentucky, and returned to Washington in advance of the other members of the presidential party. Subsequently his activity in reconstruction was much less conspicuous.

The President's appeal to the country was a complete fiasco; for, as Nasby suggested, the people were too dull to see "the danger of concentrating power in the hands of Congress instead of diffusing it through one man." It resulted in increasing Johnson's unpopularity; it encouraged the unorganized states to reject the XIV. Amendment and to decline the terms offered by Congress; it gave the Republican leaders a surer following, and convinced them that more summary methods should be applied to reconstruction. But the President was not discouraged. His annual message of 1866 reargued the question, and bill after bill, which in different ways touched the principles involved in his policy, was met with a pugnacious veto, which the majorities in Congress promptly rendered futile.

The reconstruction act of March 2, 1867, was a formal expression of the determination of the Republicans to begin anew the work of reorganizing the ten states.

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These states were divided into five military districts; the military officer in command in each district was to provide for the holding of constitutional conventions, the members of which should be chosen by citizens of the state, regardless of color, who had attained the age of twenty-one years; but all classes of persons described in the proposed XIV. Amendment as conspicuous in the Confederate movement were to be disqualified from voting or holding office, and the amendment itself must be approved by the convention. These acts subordinated the existing state organizations to the military authority; they soon tore down the ten structures built according to the President's plan; they gave the ballot to all men not political offenders; they inaugurated the broadest democracy, where a very large majority of the population was not only ignorant, but also without the moral standard that is the prerequisite of decent government. To bring about a different result, it would have been necessary for the President to be less precipitate and bigoted; for the South to be less prejudiced against the negro and to place less confidence in Johnson; and for the Republicans to be less ambitious to secure a long lease of political power for themselves, while they gave the freedman the protection he needed.

Johnson's expectation of winning the support of many Republicans had caused him to resist the demands of the Democrats for office. When Congress decided upon its new plan of reconstruction, it was feared that the President might remove many civil officers, either as a means of opposing Congress or of punishing men for not supporting him. To prevent this, Congress passed a bill providing that civil officers appointed with the advice and consent of the Senate, and not holding their positions during a period fixed by law, should not be removed without the Senate's consent; that a like consent should be obtained for the removal of any member of

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the Cabinet during the term of the President by whom he was appointed; but that the President might suspend any official, when Congress was not in session, pending action by the Senate. Any violation of this act was pronounced "a high misdemeanor," punishable by fine and imprisonment. An amendment to the army appropriation bill sought to deprive the President of the command of the army by providing that orders should issue through the general of the army, who should not be removed without the consent of the Senate. These were direct and unwarrantable attacks upon the constitutional prerogatives of the executive branch of the government.

The tenure-of-office bill was returned with another ineffectual veto, which argued the constitutional as well as the practical political question with great force and clearness. James G. Blaine believed that Seward's "hand was evident in every paragraph."¹ Any one familiar with Seward's speeches and writings will surely see that the temper, several of the ideas, and many of the phrases and words of this paper very distinctly suggest the style peculiar to the Secretary of State. No wholly conclusive evidence has been found to show that he wrote either this or any other veto message; but the fact that William M. Evarts, Seward's intimate friend and Johnson's counsel in the impeachment trial, offered to prove in that trial, but was not permitted to do so, that the preparation of this veto was given over to Seward and Stanton,² leaves very little room for doubt.

The impeachment of Johnson had been discussed almost continually since the autumn of 1866. Improbability of success had been the greatest obstacle to attempting it. One of the virtues that the tenure-of-office

¹ 2 Blaine's *Twenty Years of Congress*, 273.

² Evarts's language is quoted 2 Blaine, 369.

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act was expected to possess was that any violation of it would make impeachment easy. Stanton was the only Cabinet-officer that was entirely out of sympathy with Johnson's aims. In August, 1867, the President suspended him and appointed General Grant Secretary of War *ad interim*. After Congress met and the Senate refused to approve the President's act, Stanton resumed possession of his office. In February, 1868, he was again removed, and General Lorenzo Thomas was appointed Secretary *ad interim*. Thereupon preparations for impeachment proceedings were begun. After a trial lasting more than three months Johnson was acquitted. If one of the several Republican Senators that voted with the Democrats had cast a partisan vote, Benjamin F. Wade would have succeeded Johnson. Seward looked upon this attempt to get rid of the President as a measure that was likely to endanger constitutional government.¹ Within a few years the opinion became general that Johnson's acquittal was very fortunate.

When the presidential campaign of 1868 opened most of the ten states had recovered their former status in the Union, and the Republican platform pronounced the success of the congressional plan to be assured. "The guaranty by Congress of equal suffrage to all loyal men at the South was demanded by every consideration of public safety, of gratitude, and of justice, and must be maintained; while the question of suffrage in all the loyal states properly belongs to the people of those states," said the same authority. General Grant was chosen as the party candidate for the presidency, and Schuyler Colfax, one of the leaders at the Capitol, was given the second place on the ticket. On the other hand, the Democratic platform called interference with suffrage in the states "a flagrant usurpation of power," and it

¹ 3 Seward, 876.

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regarded "the reconstruction acts (so-called) of Congress, as such, as usurpations and unconstitutional, revolutionary, and void." While one platform charged Johnson with treachery, usurpations, and abuses, the other said that he was "entitled to the gratitude of the whole American people." The Democratic candidates were Horatio Seymour, who had not been an enthusiastic supporter of the late war, and Frank P. Blair, a brave Federal soldier, who had recently said in a letter that there was "but one way to restore the government and the Constitution," and that was for the President-elect to declare the acts of reconstruction "null and void, compel the army to undo its usurpations at the South, disperse the carpet-bag state governments, allow the white people to reorganize their own governments, and elect Senators and Representatives."¹

These circumstances were somewhat embarrassing for Seward, who approved Johnson's policy; but he had no more sympathy with the revolutionary tendencies of the Democrats than with the recent revolutionary acts of the Republicans. In a political speech to his friends and neighbors in Auburn, on the eve of the election, he explained his position in the present and in the past. As to reconstruction he said :

"I simply say that as I stood firmly by the wise and magnanimous policy of President Lincoln in his life, so I have adhered to the same policy since his mortal remains were committed to an untimely grave, and I have adhered with equal fidelity to his constitutional successor.

"When the civil war came to an end, no wise man supposed that the transition could be abruptly made from a state of civil war to a condition of tranquillity and peace without occasional disturbance to be produced by inconsiderate individuals, and even by unlawful combinations of disappointed and excited men. . . . I have habitually thought that all needful political wisdom in regard to that

¹ McPherson, 881.

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crisis was contained in the Scriptural injunction, 'agree with your adversary quickly,' and that this injunction, which is true in regard to all adversaries, is especially true when your adversaries are estranged brethren."¹

He now preferred to support the Republicans, although they had committed some grievous mistakes. "Nevertheless, the Republican party neither rests under any suspicion of its devotion to human freedom, nor can it fall under any such suspicion."² The Democratic party had "not so conducted itself in its corporate and responsible action as to secure the entire confidence of a loyal and exacting people in its unconditional and uncompromising adherence to the Union, or in its acceptance and approval of the effective abolition of slavery." He appreciated the patriotism and heroism of many of the Democrats, but the party as a whole had not freed itself from the errors and shortcomings of its leaders during the war, and therefore it was not yet prepared "to assume the responsibilities of a rescued and regenerated nation."³

The overwhelming Republican victory, which gave Grant two hundred and fourteen electoral votes as against eighty for Seymour, put an end to all hope of undoing what had been accomplished by the congressional plan.

Considering that Seward had no special responsibility in regard to President Johnson's acts, he has been too severely judged for his part in reconstruction. If Lincoln had lived he and Seward would probably have developed their plans gradually and tentatively. As in the contest with the abolitionists about a proclamation of emancipation, it is likely that Lincoln would have found a way to yield some of his preferences while he kept

¹ 5 *Works*, 550.

² 5 *Works*, 553.

³ 5 *Works*, 553, 554.



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general control. But Johnson's pugnacity, prejudices, and violent language alienated sober-minded men. Contrary to what is frequently supposed, there was not so close a mutual sympathy between Johnson and Seward as there had been between Lincoln and Seward. They had common interests, and felt a common antipathy to most of the aims of Sumner and Thaddeus Stevens; but while Johnson despised these radical leaders, Seward usually got on pleasantly with them, and even enlisted them in the championship of one or more of his enterprises. The presidential policy in its origin and first steps was largely due to Seward, but as prosecuted and quarreled about, it was almost wholly Johnson's. At times Seward's support was merely perfunctory. He philosophized mildly, and continued loyal to his chief; but he did not study or try to master the conflicting forces as he had done in 1860-61. His conduct proved, as he said in 1844, that he loved peace and harmony with his fellow-men. As will soon be seen, his ambition, strength, and best thoughts were devoted to several questions in foreign relations.

CHAPTER XLII

ASPIRATIONS FOR TERRITORIAL EXPANSION: THE PURCHASE OF ALASKA; ATTEMPTS TO ANNEX ST. THOMAS, ST. JOHN, SANTO DOMINGO, AND HAWAII

SEWARD was a very conspicuous prophet of territorial expansion. His lively imagination and enthusiasm, which were easily stirred by mere magnitude, his belief in vast national enterprises, his fondness for optimistic speculation, and his understanding of certain currents and traits of civilization in this hemisphere—all tended to lead him into predictions of the future influence and extent of the United States. Public sentiment at the North, as has been noticed, forbade him to favor any acquisition that would relatively increase the political power of the South. But he felt confident that the United States were to exercise the paramount influence on this continent and in and beyond the Pacific, not only by example, but also by actual governmental control and incorporation.

In a political letter written in 1846, he said: "Our population is destined to roll its resistless waves to the icy barriers of the North, and to encounter oriental civilization on the shores of the Pacific."¹ During the debate about the compromise of 1850, he spoke of "the strifes yet to come over ice-bound regions beyond the St. Lawrence and sun-burnt plains beneath the tropics."² In a eulogy of Henry Clay, in 1852, he expressed this opinion:

¹ 8 *Works*, 409.

² 1 *Works*, 109.

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"Expansion seems to be regulated, not by any difficulties of resistance, but by the moderation which results from our own internal constitution. No one knows how rapidly that restraint may give way. . . . Even prudence will soon be required to decide whether distant regions, east and west, shall come under our own protection, or be left to aggrandize a rapidly spreading and hostile domain of despotism."¹ At St. Paul, in 1860, he had this vision :

"Standing here and looking far off into the northwest, I see the Russian as he busily occupies himself in establishing seaports and towns and fortifications, on the verge of this continent, as the outposts of St. Petersburg, and I can say, 'Go on and build up your outposts all along the coast, up even to the Arctic Ocean—they will yet become the outposts of my own country—monuments of the civilization of the United States in the northwest.' So I look off on Prince Rupert's Land and Canada, and see there an ingenious, enterprising, and ambitious people occupied with bridging rivers and constructing canals, railroads, and telegraphs to organize and preserve great British provinces north of the great lakes, the St. Lawrence, and around the shores of Hudson bay, and I am able to say, 'It is very well; you are building excellent states to be hereafter admitted into the American Union.' I can look southwest and see amid all the convulsions that are breaking the Spanish-American republics, and in their rapid decay and dissolution, the preparatory stage for their reorganization in free, equal, and self-governing members of the United States of America."²

At the same time he remarked that in casting about "for the future the ultimate central seat of power of the North American people," he had concluded, after looking at Quebec, New Orleans, Washington, San Francisco, Cincinnati, and St. Louis, that it "would yet be found in the valley of Mexico; that the glories of the Aztec capital would be renewed, and that city would become ulti-

¹ 8 *Works*, 109.

² 4 *Works*, 333.

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mately the capital of the United States of America.”¹ Persons not in sympathy with his prophecies had maintained that he was in favor of adding at least a part of China to the national domain. That this did him no injustice he himself made evident, in 1861, when he wrote to Cassius M. Clay: “Russia and the United States may remain good friends until, each having made a circuit of half the globe in opposite directions, they shall meet and greet each other in regions where civilization first began, and where, after so many ages, it has become now lethargic and helpless.”²

Probably to suit some temporary purpose, he also prophesied that Canada would not be annexed. After he returned from Labrador, in 1857, he wrote a letter, which was printed in the *Evening Journal*, saying that his previous opinion about the future of Canada was dropped “as a national conceit.”

“I find them jealous of the United States and of Great Britain, as they ought to be; and, therefore, when I look at their resources and extent, I know that they will be neither conquered by the former nor permanently held by the latter. They will be independent as they are already self-maintaining. Having happily escaped the curse of slavery, they will never submit themselves to the dominion of slave-holders, which prevails in, and determines the character of, the United States.” . . . “All southern political stars must set, though many times they rise again with diminished splendor. But those which illumine the pole remain forever shining, forever increasing in splendor.”

On several occasions, both before and after this time, he expressed confidence that the United States were to be the only power on this continent. Naturally, therefore,

¹ 4 *Works*, 331, 332. This was one of his favorite political dreams, and he often spoke of it in private. In 1868 he thought it would come about in thirty years.—4 *Pierce's Sumner*, 328.

² *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 293. For other opinions favorable to expansion, etc., see *ante*, p. 151, and 4 *Works*, 811, 812, 899.

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this counter-prophecy of 1857 was soon forgotten—forgotten even by its author, until during the *Trent* excitement it was brought to mind and used to refute the charges that Seward had shown an aggressive spirit against Great Britain by advocating the annexation of Canada.¹

In all Seward's dreams of territorial expansion was the expectation that they were to be realized by peaceful means, such as the quiet spread of population and the growth of commerce.² Although his opinion may have been affected by political considerations in relation to the Mexican War, then impending, he wrote, in 1846: "I want no war. I want no enlargement of territory, sooner than it would come if we were content with 'a masterly inactivity.' I abhor war, as I detest slavery. I would not give one human life for all the continent that remains to be *annexed*."³ Nor would he hasten the annexation of Mexico. Fear of the increased influence of slavery resulting from incorporating tropical states led him to study out strong objections. As the inhabitants of Mexico could not govern themselves, he asked if they were to be governed by pro-consular power or by being admitted as equals. Pro-consuls must always be supported by armies, he said; and if the Mexican provinces became states of the Union, there was a serious question whether they would govern or be governed.⁴

The "Thoughts" of April 1, 1861, seem not to have been affected by any purpose to extend the boundaries

¹ Neither the long letter (reprinted in the *Philadelphia Press* of January 8, 1862) nor the despatch of the same date to Adams, quoting and explaining it, is published or referred to in Seward's *Works*, or the *Diplomatic Correspondence*, or Baker's, F. W. Seward's, or Lothrop's biography.

² See *ante*, p. 68.

³ 3 *Works*, 409.

⁴ 3 *Works*, 655. Somewhat similar expressions are used in the eulogy on John Quincy Adams, 3 *Works*, 75, 76.

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of the United States. But if the vast war contemplated had destroyed monarchical influences on this continent, the United States would probably have been left at the head of a great confederation. That Seward was ready to give a practical expression to his aspirations for territorial expansion is proved by his instructions of June 3, 1861, to Corwin, saying that the United States would purchase Lower California rather than let any part of it fall, either by purchase or conquest, into the hands of the Confederates. But as the Mexican government, like that of the United States, was barely able to sustain itself, there was no time to think about voluntarily contracting boundary lines.

The purchase of Alaska has often been called Seward's greatest service to his country. A vast territory which Russia acquired by right of discovery and held for considerably more than a century, was sold to the United States before hardly a dozen Americans knew that such a proposition was even under consideration. There is a tradition that during Polk's administration something was said to Russia about parting with her possessions in North America. It is certain that as early as 1859 Senator Gwin and the Assistant Secretary of State discussed the question with Stoeckl, the Russian Minister at Washington, and that as much as five million dollars was offered.¹ The official answer was that this sum was not regarded as adequate, but that Russia would be ready to carry on negotiations as soon as the Minister of Finance could look into the question. There was no occasion for haste; Buchanan soon went out of office; and the subject, which was never known to many persons, seems to have been entirely forgotten for several years.

¹ Charles Sumner's speech on *The Cession of Russian America*, 8.
474

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The interests of a few citizens on the Pacific slope were the main-spring of the little that had been done. For more than a decade San Francisco had annually received a large amount of ice from Russian America,¹ and United States fishermen had been profitably engaged in different parts of the far northern Pacific. Those interests had rapidly increased from year to year. At the beginning of 1866 the legislature of Washington territory sent a petition to President Johnson, saying that an abundance of codfish, halibut, and salmon had been found along the shores of Russian America, and requesting him to obtain from the Russian government such concessions as would enable American fishing vessels to visit the ports and harbors of that region for the purpose of obtaining fuel, water, and provisions.² Sumner says that this was referred to the Secretary of State, who suggested to Stoeckl that some comprehensive arrangement should be made to prevent any difficulties arising between the United States and Russia on account of the fisheries. About this time several Californians wished to obtain a franchise to carry on the fur-trade in Russian America. Senator Cole, of California, urged both Seward and Stoeckl to support the request. Seward instructed Cassius M. Clay, the United States Minister at St. Petersburg, to consult the Russian government on the subject. Clay reported in February, 1867, that there was a prospect of success. In fact, the time happened to be peculiarly opportune for negotiation.

Russian America had never been brought under the regular rule of the imperial government. Since the beginning of the century its few thousand civilized inhabitants had been governed by a great monopoly called

¹ H. H. Bancroft's *Alaska*, 587.

² Memorial quoted by Sumner, 9.

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the Russian-American Company. Its charter had expired with the year 1861, and had not been renewed; yet a renewal was expected. This monopoly was so unprofitable that it had sought and obtained special privileges, such as the free importation of tea into Russia. It had even sublet some of its privileges to the Hudson Bay Company. This sublease to Englishmen was to expire in June, 1867. By the usual means of communication Russian America was from Russia one of the most distant regions on earth. To organize it as a colony would involve great expense and continuous financial loss. To defend it in time of war with Great Britain or the United States would be an impossibility. When the Crimean war broke out common interest led the Russian-American and the Hudson Bay companies to induce their respective governments to neutralize the Russian and the British possessions on the northwest coast of America.¹ Otherwise Great Britain might easily have seized the Russian territory. To the imperial government at the beginning of 1867 the problem resolved itself into these three questions: Shall the charter of the monopoly, with its privileges and unsatisfactory treatment of the inhabitants, be renewed? Shall an expensive colonial system be organized? Shall we sell at a fair price territory that will surely be lost, if it ever becomes populated and valuable? It was foreseen that unless sold to the most constant and grateful of Russia's friends, it was likely to be taken by her strongest and most inveterate enemy. Stoeckl was spending part of the winter of 1866-67 in St. Petersburg, and the different questions were talked over with him, for he had long been Minister to the United States. In February, 1867, as he was about to return to Washington, "the Archduke Constantine, the

¹ Bancroft's *Alaska*, 570.

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brother and chief adviser of the Emperor, handed him a map with the lines in our treaty marked upon it, and told him he might treat for this cession."¹

The following month Stoeckl and Seward began negotiations. One named ten million dollars as a reasonable price; the other offered five millions. Then they took the middle ground — namely, seven million five hundred thousand — as a basis. Seward urged and Stoeckl agreed that the half million should be dropped. The Russian-American Company still claimed privileges and held interests that could not be ignored. Seward saw the objections to assuming any responsibility for matters of this kind; so he offered to add two hundred thousand dollars to the seven millions if Russia would give a title free from all liabilities. On the evening of March 29, 1867, the Russian Minister called at Seward's house and informed him of the receipt of a cablegram reporting the Emperor's consent to the proposition, and then he added that he would be ready to take up the final work the next day, for haste was desirable. With a smile of satisfaction at the news, Seward pushed aside the table where he had been enjoying his usual evening game of whist, and said: "Why wait till tomorrow, Mr. Stoeckl? Let us make the treaty to-night." The needed clerks were summoned; the Assistant Secretary went after Sumner, the chairman of the Senate committee on foreign affairs; the Russian Minister sent for his assistants; and at midnight all met at the Department of State. By four o'clock in the morning the task was completed. In a few hours the President sent the treaty to the Senate. As only Sumner knew of what had taken place, it was supposed that the message announced was a veto of some recent bill.²

¹ Sumner, 9.

² Most of the statements in this paragraph are based on Seward, 347-49.

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On questions of foreign policy Sumner had great influence in the Senate at this time. He made a thorough study of the resources of Alaska, and championed the treaty with persistency and a very impressive array of facts; yet he was no enthusiast for expansion.¹ As the proposition of cession came from Russia, and at a time when the United States were in financial difficulties on account of the expenditures of the Civil War, it was made the object of much ridicule. Many persons assumed that the territory was a frozen region where there was but little animal or vegetable life, and that its inhabitants, excepting a few Russians, were Esquimaux, and its chief products polar-bears and glaciers. It was often spoken of as Walrussia. The area of the cession is five hundred and seventy-seven thousand three hundred and ninety square miles. Even if valueless except for furs and fisheries, there could be no great loss at the price agreed on. As the population, aside from the aborigines, numbered only about ten thousand,² and as no foreign complications were to be feared, there were no grounds for weighty political objections. However, there would have been no likelihood of ratifying the treaty if only the supposed desirability of the territory had been involved. The important fact was that Russia wished to sell. Both the government and the people of the United States still entertained feelings of gratitude toward her. She refused Napoleon's proposition of intervention in 1862, and about a year later

¹ "But there is one other point on which I file my *caveat* . This treaty must not be a precedent for a system of indiscriminate and costly annexation. . . . But I cannot disguise my anxiety that every stage in our predestined future shall be by natural processes without war, and I would add even without purchase. There is no territorial aggrandizement which is worth the price of blood. . . . Our triumph should be by growth and organic expansion in obedience to 'pre-established harmony,' recognizing always the will of those who are to become our fellow-citizens."—Sumner, 16.

² Sumner, 24.

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she sent her fleet to New York and Washington, where there were great demonstrations of friendship between the two governments. It was widely believed—though without the slightest authority—that this fleet was to help the United States in case of war with France or Great Britain. Only two Senators voted against the treaty. Ratifications were exchanged and the treaty was proclaimed June 20, 1867. Doubtless to make it practically impossible for the House to refuse to appropriate the money, commissioners were appointed by each government within a few weeks, and the actual transfer occurred October 11, 1867, accompanied by military salutes between the Russian and the United States troops. At this time the name Alaska—which Seward had chosen from the many that had been suggested—came officially into use.¹ When the House took up the question of voting the appropriation, much ill-feeling was expressed on account of the speed and secrecy with which the treaty had been negotiated. Jealousy of the power of the Senate and hatred of the administration were also influential. But the desire not to exhibit any lack of appreciation of Russia's friendship prevailed with many members, and the bill was passed by a vote of one hundred and thirteen to forty-three.²

During the Civil War most of the inhabitants of the British, the Spanish, and the French West Indies sympathized with the Confederacy. Confederate cruisers usually received a welcome in those islands, and the local governors connived at almost everything that did not convict them of a flagrant violation of neutrality. On the other hand, Federal warships were treated with cold formality, watched, and denied coal and repairs whenever a plausible excuse could be found. In the

¹ Seward, 369.

² *Globe*, 1867-68, 4055.

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Danish West Indies just the reverse was the case. The governor of the island of St. Thomas was so friendly that United States men-of-war could openly or secretly obtain special favors.¹ However, Lincoln's administration continually felt the inconvenience of not having in the West Indies a ship-yard and a fortified harbor, where prizes could be passed on, so as to save long and expensive journeys.

Not only was Denmark the power most likely to consent to part with one or more of her West Indian possessions, but her island of St. Thomas was regarded as especially well suited to the purposes in view. It is about twelve miles long and three miles wide, and at that time contained a population of thirteen thousand inhabitants, most of whom spoke English.² The

¹ James Parton, *The Danish Islands*, 6.

² Subsequently, Vice-Admiral David D. Porter gave this opinion: "St. Thomas lies right in the track of all the vessels from Europe, Brazil, East Indies, and the Pacific Ocean bound to the West India islands or to the United States. . . . It is a central point from which any or all of the West India islands can be assailed, while it is impervious to attack from landing parties, and can be fortified to any extent. . . . St. Thomas is a small Gibraltar of itself, and could only be attacked by a naval force."—Parton, 68. Ex-Assistant Secretary of the Navy Fox pronounced the harbor "one of the best in the West Indies, admirable for naval purposes, and fully equal to all the requirements of the commerce of those seas."—Parton, 71. The correctness of these opinions was disputed later.

Parton wrote a good account of the attempt to acquire two of the Danish islands. He was employed by the Danish representative at Washington, who supplied him with confidential documents (4 Pierce's *Sumner*, 619), and with memoranda of interviews with Seward at different times. His inferences and pleas are sometimes *ex parte*, but his statements and use of the records were commended even by opponents. The sketch by Miss Olive Risley Seward (2 *Scribner's Magazine*, new series, 585 ff.), the reply by Sumner's biographer (4 Pierce, 615 ff.), and the letters by "Dixon" (reprinted from the *Boston Advertiser* of several dates in January, 1869), and by Robert J. Walker (reprinted from the *Washington Chronicle* of January 28, 1868), are much less complete and valuable than Parton's pamphlet.

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island of St. John, much less desirable, has about the same area, but a very small population. Santa Cruz, the other important island of that group, has a population and an area of about twice those of St. Thomas.

In January, 1865, Seward first suggested to the Danish Minister at Washington, General Raasloff, that the United States wished to purchase these islands. The proposition was not received with favor by the Danish government, mainly for the reason that the Prussian amputation of Schleswig-Holstein had weakened and humiliated the Danes so that they were eager to avoid any further appearance of a decline of national prestige. So the question was laid aside until near the end of 1865. Meantime a new Danish Ministry had come into power, and it concluded that a large sum of money might be more beneficial to the interests of the nation than the possession of the islands.

When this was reported to Seward he was about to leave in a United States man-of-war, the *De Soto*, for a month's cruise in the West Indies. The party consisted of the Secretary, the Assistant Secretary, Mrs. F. W. Seward, and her sister. Avowedly the purpose of the trip was to benefit the health of Seward and his son, neither of whom had recovered from the effects of the murderous assault in the previous April. Notwithstanding the question of health, and Seward's earnest desire not to let the public or foreign nations know of his communications with Denmark, it was widely believed that he was thinking of acquisitions in the tropics. Doubtless the use of a government ship for a family outing strengthened this belief. The *De Soto* made straight for the harbor of St. Thomas. Seward passed three busy days there, meeting everybody and seeing everything of interest. Then a short time was spent on the island of Santa Cruz. In returning the

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travelers stopped at Santo Domingo city. Seward held a conference with the swarthy members of the revolutionary government, which was anxious to be recognized by the United States. The vessel next touched at Port-au-Prince, where the President and Cabinet of a still blacker republic received Seward with a display and formality that bore no resemblance to "republican simplicity." From Hayti the *De Soto* proceeded to Havana. The party were generously entertained by the Captain-General of Cuba. Notwithstanding Seward's physical condition, he was constantly active as a sight-seer and as a recipient of hospitalities. In fact, at all the ports visited he was treated very much like a state guest. Before the end of January, 1866, he was again in Washington.¹

The day following Seward's return home he had an interview with the Danish Minister about the proposed cession, and the question was frequently spoken of during the next six months. Neither one wished to suggest a price. At length Raasloff expressed his personal opinion that twenty-five million dollars would be a reasonable sum, and "twenty millions would be the absolutely minimum price." This was certainly complimentary to the supposed munificence, if not to the judgment, of the United States. On July 17, 1866, as Raasloff was about to return to Denmark for the summer, Seward handed him a written offer of five million dollars for the three islands.² Nothing but great eagerness to bring about an agreement as soon as possible would have induced Seward to transfer the negotiations to Copenhagen. Yet no progress was made during the next ten months, although Seward repeatedly urged haste, caused Senator Doolittle to visit the Danish capital, and later to try to

¹ 3 Seward, 302-19, and *Godey's Magazine*, April-November, 1894, give particulars of this journey.

² Parton, 18.

³ Parton, 15, quotes the letter.

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enlist the aid of the Russian Chancellor, Prince Gortchakoff.¹ In a note of March 17, 1867, Seward also besought the Russian Minister at Washington to ask his government to use its influence to persuade Denmark to consent to part with her West Indian islands. This was shortly after Russia had announced her desire to sell Alaska. Not until May 17, 1867, would the Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Frijs, give a definite answer to Seward's offer, which he declined. He was willing, however, to sell the three islands for fifteen millions, or St. Thomas and St. John for ten millions. And in any case there should be no sale without the free and formal consent of the people of the islands concerned. Seward promptly offered seven and a half millions in gold for the three islands, but he objected to consulting the islanders; he was afraid that some influence might induce them to vote adversely. This proposition was also declined by Count Frijs. Then the Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs said that the United States might have two of the islands for seven and a half millions, and the third for three and three-quarter millions, but the popular vote must be a precedent condition, because right in itself, and an established custom of Europe.² Thereupon the United States Minister broke off negotiations. In July, 1867, Seward telegraphed ordering the acceptance of Denmark's offer for St. Thomas and St. John. Still Denmark held fast to the demand for a popular vote. Seward persisted in his objection until October, and then, finding that he must either yield or give up his hopes of acquisition, consented to the condition. A monarch would not sell his sovereignty over even distant subjects without their consent; Seward, avowedly a life-long democrat, endeavored to ignore their wishes. The treaty was signed in Copenhagen, October 24, 1867.

¹ 2 *Scribner's Magazine*, new series, 592.

² Parton, 25, 26, 27.

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Next came the question of taking the vote of the inhabitants of St. Thomas and of St. John. Seward appointed the Reverend Doctor Hawley, of Auburn, to act as United States commissioner to help secure a favorable decision. St. Thomas had long been a free port, and its merchants supposed that this was the fountain of their prosperity. They asked that the United States tariff should not, for a considerable time at least, be extended to their harbor. Then, in November, 1867, came a most destructive earthquake, followed by a huge wave, and, later, by a hurricane. Each caused much damage and alarm. The vote was postponed, and the commissioners hastened to Washington, hoping to obtain some assurance that the freedom of the port would not be disturbed. No such arrangement was practicable. The best that could be done was to impress the islanders with the advantages of becoming citizens of the American Union, and to arouse their fears by saying that the United States were determined to have a military and naval station in the West Indies, and if not at St. Thomas, then at some place that would injure the prosperity of their port. So the Danish commissioner returned and made these representations.¹

The vote was taken early in January, 1868. The voters formed in procession behind the United States flag and a band playing "Hail Columbia." In St. Thomas one thousand and thirty-nine ballots were cast in favor of annexation and only twenty-two against it. In St. John two hundred and five voted for the cession, and no one against it.²

¹ Parton, 38.

² Parton, 39. Parton quotes one of the newspapers as saying: "The success of the blue [annexation] ticket relieves both contracting parties from an embarrassing position, since it would have been hard to tell how the treaty could have been finally ratified on either side in the absence of a successful *plebiscitum*—the only mod-

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The Danish Rigsdag ratified and the King signed the treaty at the end of January, 1868. But ratification by the United States Senate was never to be obtained. When Seward's aims first became known there was no appreciable opposition, for after a long period of disagreeable domestic questions the country always relishes a change to foreign affairs. The purchase of Alaska both satisfied this impulse and brought out a free expression of opinion on the part of the opponents of expansion. On November 25, 1867, Washburn, of Wisconsin, introduced in the House a resolution declaring that "in the present financial condition of the country any further purchases of territory are inexpedient, and this House will hold itself under no obligation to vote money to pay for any such purchase." . . . After he explained that there was no intention to have this apply to Alaska,¹ the resolution was adopted. Even if the preparation of impeachment proceedings against the President had not been uppermost in the minds of Congressmen, there would have been no likelihood of the completion of the bargain by the United States. The earthquake and the hurricane enabled the opposition to cover the enterprise

ern method by which one people may now be incorporated with another, and at the same time exempt the contractors from the odium of having handed over their citizens or subjects as simply materials for purchase and sale."

¹ "MR. SPEAKER: I do not intend that resolution to apply to Walrusia. . . . But it is rumored in the papers—whether it is true or not I cannot say—that the Secretary of State has been making another purchase without consulting any one, in the absence of any public sentiment requiring it, or of any demand from any quarter. I intend that that action shall be covered by the resolution. I intend to serve notice upon the kingdom of Denmark that this House will not pay for that purchase; and I mean to serve notice upon the world that we will pay for no purchases that the Secretary of State, on his own motion, may see proper to make—that no purchase will be sanctioned that is not demanded by the public sentiment and the best interests of the country."—*Cong. Globe*, 1867, 792.

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with ridicule. The treaty had no champion among the members of the Senate committee on foreign affairs.¹ It was due to Seward's skill and persistency that it even approached success, for there never was any considerable public sentiment in favor of the project. The Senate decided to lay the treaty on the table; which, in this case, was regarded as equivalent to rejection, but as the method least likely to embarrass Raasloff, who had many friends among the Senators.² Johnson's term expired, and Hamilton Fish became Secretary of State before all hope for the treaty was abandoned. President Grant pronounced the undertaking "a scheme of Seward's," and would have nothing to do with it.³ In 1870 the committee on foreign affairs reported unanimously against ratification, and the Senate seems to have given a unanimous acquiescence in that opinion.⁴

Seward would have been glad to perform as Secretary what he had prophesied as Senator. He often remarked that he wished to extend the Union up to the north pole and down to the tropics.⁵ Unexpectedly Russia opened the way to the Arctic. Mindful of the law of probabilities, Seward was unwilling to limit to one or two enterprises his chances to make acquisitions of territory. In the winter of 1866-67—that is, while reluctant Denmark was still reflecting—a special appropriation for the secret service of the Department of State was obtained, and the Assistant Secretary of State and Admiral Porter went to Santo Domingo authorized to inspect and make a treaty for the purchase of the gulf and peninsula of Samana. At that time the Dominican government was not ready for positive negotiations.⁶ Near the end of 1867 a favorable decision was reached and

¹ 4 Pierce, 623.

² 4 Pierce, 329.

³ 4 Pierce, 622.

⁴ 4 Pierce, 329, 624.

⁵ 3 Seward, 872.

⁶ 3 Seward, 344, 345.

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a commissioner was sent to Washington to conclude the desired treaty. But no considerable progress was made with the project.

Before Johnson's annual message of 1868 was sent to Congress, Seward undoubtedly saw that the attempt to acquire the Danish islands would fail. As annual messages are often largely made up from parts supplied by the different departments, and as Johnson was almost wholly engrossed in opposing and denouncing congressional reconstruction, whereas Seward was anxious to give prominence to foreign relations, some opinions about expansion expressed in Johnson's last annual message are particularly important. This message said that the President had been obliged to ask explanation and satisfaction for national injuries committed by the President of Hayti, and that the political and social conditions of the republics of Hayti and Santo Domingo were "very unsatisfactory and painful."

"Comprehensive national policy would seem to sanction the acquisition and incorporation into our Federal Union of the several adjacent continental and insular communities as speedily as it can be done peacefully, lawfully, and without any violation of national justice, faith, or honor. . . . Each one of them, when firmly established as an independent republic, or when incorporated into the United States, would be a new source of strength and power." . . .

. . . "I am satisfied that the time has arrived when even so direct a proceeding as a proposition for an annexation of the two republics of the island of St. Domingo would not only receive the consent of the people interested, but would also give satisfaction to all other foreign nations."

In reply to the objection that the political system of the United States could not be successfully applied beyond this continent, the opinion was expressed that "with the increased facilities for intercommunication between all portions of the earth, the principles of free government, as embraced in our Constitution, if faithfully main-

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tained and carried out, would prove of sufficient strength and breadth to comprehend within their sphere and influence the civilized nations of the world."¹

During the autumn and winter of 1868-69 Santo Domingo indulged in another little civil war. On January 29, 1869, Seward wrote to General Banks, chairman of the House committee on foreign affairs: "Within the present week, however, a reliable and confidential proposition comes from the Dominican republic, which proposes immediate annexation, waives all preliminary stipulations, and addresses itself simply to the discretion and friendship of the United States. An agent from Santo Domingo awaits the directions of the government." In the hope of rushing this measure through, Orth, of Indiana, a vigorous leader, being undoubtedly inspired by Seward, introduced a joint resolution providing for the admission of the territory of Santo Domingo, on the application of the people and government of that republic, into the Union as a territory of the United States, with a view to the ultimate establishment of a state government.² The resolution was not accompanied by a report setting forth the facts. The sole explanation in behalf of the proposition was made by Orth in these words: "Without wishing to debate this resolution, I desire to state that it has the approba-

¹ It was at least odd that such sentiments should closely follow this sentence: "It is, indeed, a question of grave consideration whether our recent and present example is not calculated to check the growth and expansion of free principles, and make those [West Indian] communities distrust, if not dread, a government which at will consigns to military domination states that are integral parts of our Federal Union, and, while ready to resist any attempts by other nations to extend to this hemisphere the monarchical institutions of Europe, assumes to establish over a large portion of the people a rule more absolute, harsh, and tyrannical than any known to civilized powers." This was evidently from Johnson's pen. The sentences quoted above must have been inspired, and probably drafted, by Seward.

² 3 Seward, 898.

³ *Globe*, 1868-69, 769.

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tion of a large majority of the committee on foreign affairs. I call for the previous question." This was a demand for an immediate vote on the measure. One member asked if the House was "to go it blind"; another said: "I would inquire if it is proposed to gag the House on so important a proposition as this?" Orth insisted, and would allow neither substitute nor debate. But Holman, of Indiana, moved to lay the resolution on the table. He was supported by a yea and nay vote of one hundred and ten to sixty-three, which brought the amazing scheme to a speedy end, as far as Johnson's administration was concerned.

In 1867, when the reciprocity treaty with Hawaii was under consideration, Seward instructed the representative of the United States that if reciprocity and annexation should come into conflict with each other, "annexation is in every case to be preferred."¹ By the summer of 1868 he realized that there was then hardly any possibility of making those islands a part of the United States, for "public attention sensibly continues to be fastened upon the domestic questions which have grown out of our late civil war. The public mind refuses to dismiss these questions, even so far as to entertain the higher, but more remote, questions of national extension."² It was enough to try the soul of an optimist to think that a nation, after four years of destructive and costly civil war, should let such subjects as reconstruction, "economy and retrenchment," be "the prevailing considerations."

Even before this time Seward's keen insight had marked the unwisdom of the great majority in Congress and among the people, and he described it in these words: "In short, we have already come to value dol-

¹ 3 Seward, 373.

² 3 Seward, 383.

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lars more and dominion less.”¹ Nothing short of thirty years of humdrum tranquillity, prosperity, and intellectual growth would be adequate punishment for a republic so lacking in appreciation of things “higher but more remote” as to think that the incorporation of “the several adjacent continental and insular communities” was of less importance than close attention to the obligations incurred in saving the Union and to reorganizing what the war had left.

The annexation of territory, the inhabitants of which have come into close relations and sympathy with the United States, cannot be very dangerous if effected in compliance with a sober public opinion. But Seward's practice bore no resemblance to such a course. He began, in January, 1865, by searching for a harbor in the West Indies, but he was extremely anxious to keep the subject a secret. He did not wish to consult either his countrymen or the persons whose nationality he strove to change; and when the treaty had to go before the Senate its advocates declared that the thing was *done*, and that it would be a wrong to the other power concerned to fail to ratify what had already been solemnly agreed to. But the sentiments expressed in the annual message of 1868 and the efforts to acquire Santo Domingo—which also meant the early annexation of Hayti by purchase, conquest, or intrigue—showed that he was an expansionist for the sake of expansion, and believed in rushing through the necessary legislation, while the messenger of a disordered and ignorant little nation waited for a definite answer.² Many indignantly

¹ 8 Seward, 369.

² In some instructions on another subject he said that “this government must, nevertheless, conduct its proceedings in all negotiations with proper deference and respect to the state of opinion which prevails in the Senate, in Congress, and among the people of the United States.”—1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1868, 355.



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protested against both Seward's aims and his methods. They said that he was constantly trying to do what there was no public demand for; that it was extremely unpleasant to think that any morning the country might find that during the night the Secretary of State had bought several million persons to be fellow-citizens and provided work for forty or fifty thousand soldiers. Seward's zeal for making acquisitions was doubtless increased by a desire to be involved as little as possible in the disagreeable features of the problem of reconstruction, and to have aims that should be known as distinctly his own. Although he met with only partial success, he deserves, indeed, to be regarded as the greatest prophet and leader among expansionists.

CHAPTER XLIII

I. NEGOTIATIONS ABOUT THE *ALABAMA* CLAIMS.—II. SOME TRAITS AS SECRETARY OF STATE

I. NEGOTIATIONS ABOUT THE *ALABAMA* CLAIMS

CLAIMS against Great Britain for the destruction of American merchantmen by the *Alabama* and other cruisers were duly presented by the United States Minister as they arose.¹ This was very unpleasant to Earl Russell. In September, 1863, he insisted that because the *Alabama* had not been actually fitted out in a British port as a war-vessel, there was nothing to warrant such claims. "I have only, in conclusion, to express my hope that you may not be instructed again to put forward claims which her Majesty's government cannot admit to be founded on any grounds of law or justice." To this Seward responded that "the United States do insist, and must continue to insist, that the British government is justly responsible for the damages which the peaceful, law-abiding citizens of the United States sustain by the depredations of the *Alabama*." Still, he said, there was no intention "to act dogmatically or in a litigious spirit"; and he admitted that the time was not favorable for a candid examination of either the facts or the principles involved. If the British government should decline to receive the evidence on which the claims

¹ See *ante*, 385, 386.

¹ 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 380.

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were based, then a record should be kept for future use.¹

When war ended, the "*Alabama* claims," resulting from actual losses amounting to many millions of dollars, were still unrecognized. Adams reported, September 7, 1865, that Russell then seemed less fearful of being suspected of good-will toward the United States; and the British Secretary himself soon suggested the appointment of a joint commission to which should be referred "all claims arising during the late civil war, which the two powers shall agree to refer." But he expressly said that there could be no arbitration of the question whether his government had honestly adhered to its neutrality proclamation, or whether the law officers had properly understood the foreign enlistment act, or whether there should be reparation "for the captures made by the *Alabama*."² As this was hardly as much as a short first-step in the right direction, it was promptly declined by Seward.³ He was determined to obtain more. Early in 1866 he informed Adams that both the Cabinet and the people of the United States expected Great Britain to redress the wrongs of which these claims were a result. A little later he said: "I see now no reason for apprehending that we shall at any time or under any circumstances be willing to negotiate for future contingencies without having first due regard paid to past injuries and damages."⁴ As the Secretary informed the British Minister at Washington of this opinion, it was a very important indication of strained relations between the two powers. In July, 1866, the House of Representatives unanimously passed a bill designed to remove the prohibition against selling ships and munitions of war to foreign citizens or govern-

¹ 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 395, 396.

² 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1865, 680.

³ 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1865, 545.

⁴ 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1866, 66, 74.

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ments at peace with the United States, and thus to enable American citizens to take a profitable revenge for the devastations of the *Alabama* the first time Great Britain should become involved in hostilities.

The Fenian movement, which was an attempt to establish an independent republic in Ireland, tried to increase and use for its own ends the resentment Americans felt against the British government. For several years a large number of Irish-Americans had taken a zealous interest in this cause. Conventions had been held in several American cities, and in the autumn of 1865 a general convention in New York elected a so-called president of the would-be republic, and he appointed heads of departments of war, navy, and finance. From the United States these "Irish patriots" sent emissaries to England and Ireland to give active support to the revolution. After a few thousand Fenians had invaded Canada, in June, 1866, the arms and munitions of war that the brotherhood had collected and left behind were seized, the United States garrisons on the frontier were strengthened, and President Johnson issued a proclamation against the enterprise. Many Irish-Americans were arrested in Ireland, on suspicion that they were stirring up sedition and perhaps inciting others to commit treasonable acts. They were treated as if they were subjects of Great Britain and not as American citizens, for Great Britain had never recognized the right of expatriation. As the writ of *habeas corpus* had been suspended in Ireland, Adams was soon very busy making representations in behalf of his indiscreet and unfortunate fellow-citizens.

In August, 1866, Seward sent to Adams a long list of *Alabama* claims. He said that it was the President's desire that the attention of Lord Stanley, Earl Russell's successor, should be called to them "in a respectful but earnest manner," and that he should be in-

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formed of the President's opinion that a settlement of them had "become urgently necessary to a re-establishment of entirely friendly relations" between the two governments.¹ If Great Britain had claims against the United States this government would be disposed to take them into consideration so as to remove by one comprehensive arrangement all existing causes of misunderstanding. Then he again referred to the precipitancy and unfriendliness of Great Britain's recognition of the Confederates as belligerents, and charged that "the misconduct of the aggressors [against United States commerce, etc.] was a direct and legitimate fruit of the premature and injurious proclamation of belligerency, against which we had protested, and that the failure of her Majesty's government to prevent or counteract the aggressions of British subjects was equally traceable to the same unfortunate cause." In language almost threatening, he said that when one state showed a disregard of international obligations so injurious to the citizens of another state as to awaken a general spirit of discontent and dissatisfaction, they were likely "to conform their own principles and policy, in conducting their intercourse with the offending state, to that of the party from whom the injury proceeds."² And he added, emphatically: "Thus we have seen ruinous British warlike expeditions against the United States practically allowed and tolerated by her Majesty's government, notwithstanding remonstrance; and we have seen similar unlawful attempts in this country against Great Britain disallowed and defeated by the direct and unprompted action of the government of the United States."

Lord Stanley's reply showed that Seward's statements were too sweeping. In defence of what Seward

¹ 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1866, 178.

² 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1866, 179.

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regarded as the original fountain of the evil—Great Britain's proclamation of neutrality—Stanley said that the Supreme Court of the United States and the Court of the District of Columbia held that a state of war existed prior to that proclamation. While his government could not consent to arbitrate the question as to whether the Confederates were prematurely recognized as belligerents, there would probably be no objection to arbitrating the other questions at issue between the two governments in reference to the war.¹

On January 12, 1867, Seward made a long rejoinder, which was very ambitious and ardent, but inconclusive in respect to his main contention about the recognition of belligerency. With characteristic persistency, he said that in case of arbitration the United States would expect this question to be considered along with the claims, although there was no disposition to require that any question of national pride or honor should be ruled and determined as such.

Another year passed without progress in regard to the claims. Meantime it had become apparent in England that other differences were increasing the ill-will of the United States. At the beginning of 1868 Seward called Adams's attention to several questions of great importance: a divided occupation of the island of San Juan, in the Pacific; Great Britain's treatment of Irish-Americans; the extradition of criminals; and the fisheries in the North Atlantic waters.

! "Any one of these questions may at any moment become a subject of exciting controversy. The naturalization question is already working in that way.

"It was in view of all these existing sources of controversy that the thought occurred to me that her Majesty's government, if desirous to lay a broad foundation for

¹ 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1867, 184-88.

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friendly and satisfactory relations, might possibly think it expedient to suggest a conference, in which all the matters referred to might be considered together, and so a comprehensive settlement might be attempted without exciting the sensibilities which are understood to have caused that government to insist upon a limited arbitration in the case of the *Alabama* claims.”¹

Before anything important was accomplished in the line of Seward's suggestions, Adams's resignation took effect, in May, 1868.² Throughout seven years he had maintained with great zeal and efficiency the most difficult and responsible foreign position under the government. His long notes to Russell were thorough and forcible. They contained no bombast, no phrase written for display. His sterling character was reflected in his straightforward, fearless, and well-balanced arguments, and his correspondence left “no deficiency to be supplied,” as Seward said.³ He also perfectly understood his antagonist, Earl Russell, knowing when to make a sharp reply, when an elaborate statement, and when to yield to his opponent's temper. Of course he had an advantage over both Russell and Seward, for he could and did give his entire time and energy to a few questions; and he treated them in so masterly a way that there has never been any difference of opinion as to the greatness of his talents or his service.

Reverdy Johnson, a distinguished lawyer and ex-Senator from Maryland, became Adams's successor.

¹ 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1868, 142.

² He had asked permission to resign in 1864, but the administration would not assent to it. In a personal note of November 27, 1867, to Seward, he requested a reconsideration of the question, for private matters demanded his attention, and his time had been occupied by reclaiming Irishmen from punishment, which most of them seemed to him richly to deserve, and entering into discussion about the clothes he must wear at Court.—Seward MSS.

³ 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1866, 177.

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Seward instructed¹ him to obtain from Great Britain a recognition of the same rights for naturalized as for native-born citizens of the United States; to say to Lord Stanley that until this difficulty should be overcome it would be useless to try to settle any others; and that the United States were willing to refer to arbitration the question of national dominion and ownership over the island of San Juan. After providing for the solution of these problems, he should "advert to the subject of mutual claims of citizens and subjects of the two countries against the government of each other respectively." He thought that an arrangement might be made without reviewing the former discussions, and he suggested a commission, on the model of the joint commission of February 8, 1853, for the adjustment of all claims of the citizens of either country against the government of the other. After Johnson and Lord Stanley had signed protocols touching the questions of naturalization and of the San Juan boundary, they agreed to a claims convention. This was unsatisfactory to Seward, and, under his close instructions, Johnson then concluded with Lord Clarendon, Stanley's successor, what is known as the Johnson-Clarendon convention of January 14, 1869.

It provided for the settlement of all claims arising since July 26, 1853. The President and the Queen were each to name two commissioners, and these in turn were to select an arbiter to whom should be referred for final judgment any claim that the commissioners might not be able to decide. If they could not agree on an arbiter, then each side should designate a person, and the arbiter should be chosen by lot from these two. If any two or more of the commissioners should desire a sovereign or the head of a friendly state to act as final umpire in any case, then the two governments should agree on one

¹ 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1868, 328-331.

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within six months. It was thought that an award from such an umpire might be more readily accepted by the people and have more weight as precedent in questions referring to neutral rights. All the official correspondence in regard to any claim was to be laid before the commissioners, and other documents and statements were to be admissible. By this means the old arguments about the recognition of belligerency would come up in review.

The question of the ratification of this convention by the United States was almost wholly political or personal. The Fenian movement had increased the strong public sentiment in favor of either waiting for an opportunity to retaliate in the kind of "neutrality" Great Britain had practised or making that government pay smart-money. The feeling against the President had reached the point of spite against the administration, and Seward was the object of bitter antagonism, because it was believed that but for his influence, and that of his political friends, the impeachment trial might have succeeded. When Reverdy Johnson went abroad the public knew nothing of his instructions or of the improved disposition of the British government. Therefore, when he made very friendly speeches in England, he was supposed to have fallen under the influence of former sympathizers with the Confederacy. This caused much indignation; and, as Seward wrote, party spirit raged, and the Republicans expected and hoped that the new Minister would both fail in his negotiations and suffer humiliation for having lowered the national standard, as was alleged.¹ Now that Grant was President-elect, the Republicans were not disposed to put the seal of success upon negotiations that had been carried on by Johnson's well-hated administration. Perhaps the most effective

¹ Seward to Reverdy Johnson, October 26, 1868, quoted in Moore's *International Arbitrations*, 506.

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complaint was the one that said the convention overlooked the moral wrong, did not even refer to the *Alabama* claims by name, and made the whole question a matter of mere dollars and cents. But any objection was good enough if it helped to defeat the convention. This was accomplished by a vote of forty-four to one.

It was a hard blow to Seward. Although he foresaw that Reverdy Johnson's negotiations would encounter much hostile criticism, he predicted success. The possibility of having to choose an arbiter by lot in case of disagreement was likely to bring about decisions inconsistent with one another, for the American appointee would decide some questions and the British appointee others. Probably he chose the convention of 1853 as a model because he hoped that, as it had already been approved, it would be less open to objections than any new plan. After having warded off direct European intervention, it was a worthy ambition to desire to settle the claims resulting from what was popularly known as Great Britain's indirect intervention. Although he failed, and although the terms of the treaty of Washington, concluded under other auspices a few years later, were better adapted to solve the different problems, he did much toward bringing about a more friendly feeling between the two countries, and accomplished all that was possible, considering the adverse influences he had to contend with.

II. SOME TRAITS AS SECRETARY OF STATE

Seward's personal appearance had undergone slight change since he entered the Senate, save for the injuries he received in April, 1865. His face was a little thinner, and this made more conspicuous his noticeable features—a strong aquiline nose, a wide and shapely mouth, and large, thin ears. His shock of hair was now

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"silvery and fine"—"snow-white" it seemed to some—but it never quite lost its auburn tinge. The head, with its beetling brows, appeared too heavy for the slender neck and slight body, and projected over the chest in an argumentative sort of way, as if the keen eyes—"lively with humor of some kind twinkling about them"—were seeking an adversary. Professor Dicey saw him early in 1862 sitting in his office "dressed in black, with his waistcoat half unbuttoned, one leg over the side of his arm-chair, and a cigar between his lips," looking like "a shrewd, well-to-do attorney, waiting to learn a new client's story." Seward's frankness and *bonhomie* at once put the Englishman at his ease.¹ In Seward's face and manner there was slight indication of his intellectual power and activity: he was almost as plain and homely as Lincoln, but lacked the President's impressive height.

Seward cannot be defended from the charge of Sydney Smith against Lord Melbourne: "I accuse our Minister of honesty and diligence." During the entire period of the war he kept long office-hours, and frequently devoted Sunday to the important and exacting work of drafting despatches. Foreign mails often came at the end of the week, and required immediate answers. Saturday was consumed in reading the reports from United States Ministers. On Sunday he could meditate in quiet on the dangers abroad, and prepare further instructions, which on Monday were laid before the President. After the carriage accident, Seward's right arm remained so stiff that it was very difficult for him to write and for the reader to decipher what was written. Thus dictation became necessary, though at first it was hard for him to express his thoughts satisfactorily by this method. While dictating he often walked to and

¹ Dicey's *Federal States*, 230.

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fro, puffing his inevitable cigar, his hands behind his back, and his eyes fixed on the floor. He progressed slowly, making many changes as he proceeded. The first draft was read to him by the stenographer, and improved as much as possible, or discarded and redictated. The first copy was made on alternate lines, and subjected to a careful criticism as to words, phrases, ideas, and general style, just as a painstaking author would labor over an ambitious description.

In the following comments on Seward's diplomatic papers there is no intention to modify opinions already expressed, but only to notice some minor qualities that gave the color of the politician to much that he wrote.

Seward was so enthusiastic, and his skill in expression so great, that his despatches were spirited, fresh, and popular. The style was more often that of a political pamphlet or a public speech than that of a diplomatic document. This was due not to lack of familiarity with the usages of diplomacy, but rather to his habitual desire to influence the popular audience, which he as a leader had ever in mind. Many of his despatches were promptly given to the press, and all of them, except those containing important secrets or objectionable comment, were printed annually in the *Diplomatic Correspondence*, the publication of which Seward began in 1861. When he wrote to such men as Adams and Dayton and Bigelow about the mission of the United States in the world's progress, and informed them that this or that occurrence was natural and inevitable in times of civil war and popular excitement, he was addressing the reading public at home. It is inconsistent with Seward's intelligence that he expected to impress Russell or Thouvenel by didactic magniloquence. "But," says Justin McCarthy, in writing of the *Trent* affair, "Mr. Seward always was a terribly eloquent despatch-writer, and

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he could not, we may suppose, forego the opportunity of issuing a dissertation."¹ Undoubtedly Seward did too much thinking in ink; and a "spendthrift verbosity"

¹ Here is part of a passage taken from a despatch to Adams:

"For what was this continent brought up, as it were, from the depths of what before had been known as 'the dark and stormy ocean'? Did the European states which found and occupied it, almost without effort, then understand its real destiny and purposes? Have they ever yet fully understood and accepted them? Has anything but disappointment upon disappointment, and disaster upon disaster, resulted from their misapprehensions? After near four hundred years of such disappointments and disasters is the way of Providence in regard to America still so mysterious that it cannot be understood and confessed? Columbus, it was said, had given a new world to the kingdoms of Castile and Leon. What has become of the sovereignty of Spain in America? Richelieu occupied and fortified a large portion of the continent, extending from the Gulf of Mexico to the Straits of Belleisle. Does France yet retain that important appendage to the crown of her sovereign? Great Britain acquired a dominion here surpassing, by an hundred-fold in length and breadth, the native realm. Has not a large portion of it been already formally resigned? To whom have these vast dominions, with those founded by the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the Swedes, been resigned but to American nations, the growth of European colonists, and exiles who have come hither bringing with them the arts, the civilization, and the virtues of Europe? Has not the change been beneficial to society on this continent? Has it not been more beneficial even to Europe itself than continued European domination, if it had been possible, could have been? The American nations which have grown up here have been free and self-governing."—*Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 167.

His first instructions to Reverdy Johnson—a profound lawyer and a man of learning and ideas—began as follows:

"SIR,—It is a truism that commercial and industrial interests continually exert a powerful influence in favor of peace and friendship between the government and people of the United States and Great Britain. Intimate consanguinity, together with a nearly entire community of language and a very considerable community of political and religious principles, ideas, and sentiments, work in the same direction. On all occasions when the moral sentiment of mankind is moved in favor of national regeneration or other political reform in any part of the world, a very cordial sympathy and regard to such advances in civilization is found to exist between the two countries. This mutual, friendly disposition between the two nations manifests

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called "the nightmare of foreign ministeries"¹ was sometimes the result.

Yet Seward's democratic method of carrying on foreign relations from the public square had its advantages. The English custom by which a Cabinet-Minister can address the country in a political speech to his constituents or from the floor of Parliament was not open to Seward. His influence upon his generation was due to the fact that he never failed to consider the probable popular effect of what he said or wrote. If his aim had been merely to please the people and to gain their favor, it would have been demagogical; but when he, like Gladstone, sometimes wheedled them, or played to the gallery, it was either as a means of retaining power or of gaining the support necessary to enable him

itself more strongly now than at any former period."—1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1868, 328. For other examples, see *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 183, 196-201; *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 352-53; 1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1863, 325-28.

¹ Lowell's *Political Essays*, 293. "More than any Minister with whose official correspondence we are acquainted, he carried the principle of paper money into diplomacy, and bewildered Earl Russell and M. Drouyn de Lhuys with a horrible doubt as to the real value of the verbal currency they were obliged to receive."—*Ibid.*

James E. Harvey reported that he had attended the ceremony of laying the corner-stone of a monument to Camoens, "the great poet of Portugal." It was no more worth noticing, beyond the formal acknowledgment of its receipt, than the "bright and benignant sky" of that day. Seward replied:

"Sir,—Your despatch of June 29 [1862] has been received.

"The erection of a monument in Lisbon to the memory of the immortal poet of Portugal was not merely an act of national justice and a proper manifestation of national pride. It illustrates the eclectic, conservative faculty of nations, by which they rescue and save whatever is great, good, useful, and humane from the wrecks of time, leaving what is worthless, vicious, or pernicious to pass into oblivion.

"The incident seems doubtless the more pleasing to us because it occurs at this juncture, when we are engaged in combating, in its full development, a gigantic error which Portugal, in the age of Camoens, brought into this continent."—*Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 584.

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to accomplish a worthy object: he could stoop to conquer, but the conquest was usually such a one as only a superior leader would aspire to. There was in Seward's nature so much that was emotional and sentimental aside from what was subtle, and it was so common for him to seek to accomplish his purpose by indirect means, that it is often impossible to distinguish impulse from calculation. The "Thoughts" of April 1st were a combination of the two qualities. The draft of instructions of May 21, 1861; to Adams was mainly the product of excitement. Adams could be relied on not to repeat or read to Russell anything that seemed indiscreet; and Seward's knowledge of this, after the first few months, gave him great latitude. When the despatches to Adams were printed, they impressed the American people as if they were addressed to the British government. But Russell could take no exception to anything not communicated to him or to the British Minister at Washington. The general effect was beneficial; it indicated to the Ministry that Seward was a very daring character, and would attempt to use any mistake they might make; yet he had neither said nor done anything *directly* that they could properly resent. Seward's success in this regard was extremely irritating to the Confederate diplomatists.'

Confidence and a strong inclination to prophesy, or to explain at once whatever happened, were very conspicuous with Seward during the war period; and they

¹ "The most surprising infatuation of modern times is the thorough conviction entertained by the British Ministry that the United States are ready to declare war against England, and it is impossible not to admire the sagacity with which Mr. Seward penetrated into the secret feelings of the British Cabinet, and the success of his policy of intimidation, which the world at large supposed would be met with prompt resentment, but which he, with deeper insight into the real policy of that Cabinet, foresaw would be followed by submissive acquiescence in his demands."—Benjamin to Slidell, June 22, 1863.

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caused many to doubt his sincerity. His opinions represented hope rather than belief or sober judgment. As he often employed them for special purposes, he was not always particular about accuracy.¹ This was how it happened that he prophesied a war that he did not foresee, as was said, and foretold many things that he did not expect to come to pass, such as the end of secession and of the war in sixty or ninety days.² Without firm belief that the Confederacy would soon be conquered, the foreign service could not be thoroughly efficient. But how were United States representatives abroad to be inspired with confidence unless the Secretary of State gave them the needed encouragement? As Hosea Biglow says:

“So Mister Seward sticks a three-months’ pin
Where the war’d oughto eend, then tries agin.”

Seward’s declarations that Johnson’s plan of reconstruction must necessarily succeed illustrated the boldness of his prophecies; and the strength of his optimism was shown in the way he bore his afflictions. Mrs. Seward, who never recovered from the terrible shock caused by the murderous assault upon her husband and her sons Frederick and Augustus, died in June, 1865. And in

¹ In a despatch of May 28, 1862, to Adams, is the declaration that, although disloyalty had divided Maryland, and provoked conflict there, “The Union is now as strong in that state as in any one of the always loyal states.”—*Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 108.

² “Great Britain has but to wait a few months and all her present inconveniences will cease with all our own troubles.”—Seward, May 21, 1861. *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 90. “You spoke the simple fact when you told him that the life of this insurrection is sustained by its hopes of recognition in Great Britain and in France. It would perish in ninety days if those hopes should cease.”—Seward to Adams, November 30, 1861. “I thought that the war might be ended in three months—in six months—in a year—and I labored to that end.”—*5 Works*, 486. “If Great Britain should revoke her decree conceding belligerent rights to the insurgents to-day, this civil strife, which is the cause of

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October, 1866, the Secretary's sorrow was greatly increased by the loss of his only daughter, to whom he had shown a touching devotion in his daily letters. His mental activity and the character of his work to his last day prove the power of his will and his cheerful serenity against the flood of personal misfortune and political isolation.

Seward's habit of adapting his arguments to a preconceived conclusion, and his great tenacity of purpose in holding to his declarations, led to some very arbitrary reasoning in his diplomatic correspondence. It is often puzzling to decide whether he was conscious of it when he disregarded elementary principles of international law, or whether he supposed that by argument and insistence he could do away with principles and hoodwink his opponents. This trait was shown in the despatches about the declaration of Paris, the *Trent* affair, and several other questions, and it was conspicuous throughout his entire secretaryship in discussions concerning the warships and the belligerency of the Confederacy. He wrote officially on April 27, 1861, to Schurz, that an insurrection had developed itself, and had "assumed the organization and attitude of a separate political power"; that it had "instituted civil war"; that it had "an army of invasion directed against this capital, and a force of privateers incited to prey upon the national commerce, and ultimately, no doubt, upon the commerce of the world."¹ And although the entire coast of the

all the derangement of those relations [between the United States and Great Britain], and the only cause of all apprehended dangers of that kind, would end to-morrow."—Seward to Adams, March 6, 1862. *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 43. For the evidence of some of his contemporaries in regard to such prophecies, see 4 Pierce's *Sumner*, 17; Welles's *Lincoln and Seward*, 41; 2 Coleman's *Crittenden*, 388; W. H. Russell's *Diary*, 71.

¹ *Dip. Cor.*, 1861, 257. On May 4, 1861, he wrote to Dayton: "The United States have accepted this civil war as an inevitable necessity."

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Confederacy was declared to be blockaded, and the Federal government was preparing to exercise the belligerent right of search, Seward complained bitterly when, a few weeks later, Great Britain recognized that a state of war existed. The United States treated the Confederates as belligerents, but Seward continued until he went out of office to call the sailors pirates or "guerillas of the seas,"¹ and the soldiers insurgents or traitors. In July, 1861, he wrote to Dayton: "We do not admit, and we never shall admit, even the fundamental statement you assume—namely, that Great Britain and France have recognized the insurgents as a belligerent party."² For some reason Seward thought that if McClellan had captured Richmond in the summer of 1862 the two great powers would have withdrawn the recognition of belligerency.³ But subsequent events make it all but certain that this expectation would have been disappointed; for that recognition was not revoked until after Appomattox, and after the receipt of satisfactory evidence that the war-ships of the United States would not continue the belligerent right of search. Likewise his efforts to link with the *Alabama* claims the question of recognizing the belligerency of the Confederacy was, of course, a total failure. Notwithstanding these facts, he wrote to Adams, on January 12, 1867: "Before the Queen's proclamation of neutrality the disturbance in the United States was merely a local insurrection. It wanted the name of war to enable it to be a civil war and to live, endowed as such with maritime and other belligerent rights. Without

¹ 2 *Dip. Cor.*, 1864, 227.

² See *ante*, p. 184. Not many months later, when he began to urge both of these powers to withdraw that recognition, Dayton ingenuously inquired: "Besides, did you not refuse to take official notice of the fact that such concession ever was made?"—*Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 334.

³ *Dip. Cor.*, 1862, 181; 3 Seward, 88.

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that authorized name it might die, and was expected not to live and be a flagrant civil war, but to perish a mere insurrection." Seward never seemed to be much bothered by his own inconsistencies.¹

A few weeks after becoming Secretary, Seward moved into a large house on the east side of Lafayette Square, on a site now occupied by a theatre. It was within two minutes' walk of the White House and of the old Department of State. The generous hospitality of Seward's senatorial years quickly expanded to suit his new position—in official society the most important one after that of the President. He soon gave a series of informal receptions, so that the members of the new régime, civil and military, might become acquainted with one another. He usually invited to dinner those of his callers during the day with whom he wished to have longer conversations than the busy office-hours would permit. He lived in excellent taste, spending money freely, but not extravagantly, considering the custom of his office. At times serious military disasters cast a gloom over life at the capital; but Seward early saw that there was no better way to show his confidence of Federal success, and to inspire others with it, than to encourage social gayeties. The rich "old families" were not in sympathy with the new administration, and as yet the city had not become a highly fashionable winter resort for wealthy Northerners and Westerners. So there were few enter-

¹The fact that he had championed the Irish "patriots" in 1852 (see Vol. I, 828 ff.) did not prevent him from seeing the impertinence of public men in England when they suggested what punishment should be visited upon Jefferson Davis and the other Confederate chiefs.—1 *Dip. Cor.*, 1865, 418. To Bigelow he wrote sarcastically, July 8, 1865: "European politicians will take time to forget their interest in Jefferson Davis while they digest the proceedings of the government against the assassins of Mr. Lincoln. Europe is impatient with us, but she must wait our time."—Bigelow MSS.

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tainments during the first two years of the war, except at the White House and at the residence of the Secretary of State. Beginning with the winter of 1863-64 Washington became gayer than ever before. The regular state occasions at the Seward house were the formal dinners to the members of the Cabinet, to the Diplomatic Corps, and to the Supreme Court.¹ Distinguished foreign visitors were sure to receive from the Secretary of State attentions that showed a happy combination of formality and cordiality. Prince Jerome Napoleon, the Prince de Joinville, the Comte de Paris, and the Duc de Chartres, the officers of the Russian fleet, the Queen of Hawaii, a commission from Japan, some special envoys from China, and other famous personages, were given formal dinners or receptions, or both. Most men worthy to be Secretary of State would have been worried or bored by such obligations; but Seward saw their sunnyside, and found something enjoyable in them. Yet he was most happy and vivacious when he had about a dozen guests, sufficiently well acquainted and congenial to allow a general conversation. One Thursday in the summer of 1863 Archbishop Hughes called on him, and was invited to dinner on the next evening. His Grace suggested that the day would not be a good one for banqueting. The Secretary answered, "Never mind; I shall see that you will be provided for." Secretaries, generals, and others were present to meet the clerical guest, but there was not a particle of meat on the table. The Archbishop considered it the most delicate compliment he had ever received.

As a talker Seward had very uncommon and attractive qualities. Whether with one, a few, or many persons, he was persuasive, interesting, vivacious, or merry, according to his purpose. His talk was much oftener

¹ A contemporary account of one of these dinners says that there were seventeen courses and five kinds of wine.

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scintillating and surprising than solemn or profound; for to him conversation was perhaps the greatest of his pleasures. The London *Times* correspondent described him as "a subtle, quick man, rejoicing in power, given to perorate and to oracular utterances, fond of badinage, bursting with the importance of state mysteries." Richard Henry Dana, Jr., after spending an evening alone with Seward, in April, 1864, wrote: "His conversation always interests me, although it is strange and not always dignified; still it is natural and peculiar." Seward's public utterances were studiously discreet; in private he frequently spoke with reckless freedom—sometimes in earnest, but often—oftener than his hearers imagined—in playful extravagance. Charles A. Dana once described¹ a dinner given by the Secretary to Goldwin Smith, who did the cause of the Union great service by his articles and speeches in England. At this dinner Seward advanced and maintained, with a solemn face, the proposition that a republican form of government was a failure. Some guests, taking Seward seriously, attacked his position with great vigor, and the debate continued until about eleven o'clock. Those unacquainted with the Secretary's fondness for a paradox, or his love of an artificial encounter of this kind, were much surprised by the unrepudicated opinions expressed by their host.² Ex-Senator John B. Henderson, who has probably seen more than any other man of the best side of politico-social life in Washington during the

¹ In conversation with the author, August 19, 1894.

² Under date of December 7, 1894, Professor Smith wrote to the author: "Thirty years have now elapsed since I had the honor and pleasure of being Mr. Seward's guest. I do not recollect his introducing the proposition that republican government was a failure. If he did, it must have been for the purpose of starting a debate, or in the way of playful paradox, an exercise of wit to which he was given. He would sometimes give utterance to a playful paradox or a startling proposition with an air of seriousness which might lead his hearers to

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past thirty-five years, said¹ that he never knew any one that could surpass Seward in ability to entertain a whole company of ladies and gentlemen at dinner; that, although Seward often monopolized the talk, he held his monopoly artfully, not tyrannically or pompously, like Benton or Conkling. The preserved bits of Seward's table-talk² during six months near the end of his life, although not brilliant, indicate that he kept his mind occupied with cheerful, interesting, and philosophical thoughts. He had also a keen sense of humor, which was increased by his close and almost daily association with Lincoln. He told a story well, and joined heartily in the laughter that his narrative created. His wit was exceedingly bright at times, but his fondness for eccentric remarks was likely to misdirect it, and cause him to be entirely misunderstood, as has been noticed. Perhaps his best and most characteristic witticism was the reply to a lady who, noticing his silence during a discussion as to the probable purpose of a secret movement of troops, had asked, "Governor Seward, what do you think about it? Which way is the army going?" "Madam, if I did not know, I would tell you," he answered, with a smile.

Seward's rare social qualities were a distinct element in his success as Secretary. His ability to create and retain pleasant and even intimate relations with political and diplomatic opponents was of great value at many a critical moment. His good-humor and tact in all per-

think that he was in earnest." [Professor Smith illustrates this point by recounting the Seward-Newcastle incident.] "In his social hours Seward spoke with great freedom on all subjects, and sometimes said what, had it been maliciously repeated, might have done harm. Fortunately for him, in those days the rule of social confidence still prevailed, and a man could not have betrayed the hospitable board without forfeiting his position as a man of honor."

¹ In conversation with the author.

² 3 Seward, 470-504.

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sonal matters during his entire career were unfailing.¹
The true Seward was vividly described by Dicey:

“In our English phrase, Mr. Seward is good company. A good cigar, a good glass of wine, and a good story, even if it is *tant soit peu risqué*, are pleasures which he obviously enjoys keenly. Still, a glance at that spare, hard-knit frame, and that clear, bright eye, shows you that no pleasure, however keenly appreciated, has been indulged in to excess throughout his long, laborious career; and more than that, no one who has had the pleasure of seeing him amongst his own family can doubt about the kindliness of his disposition. It is equally impossible to talk much with him without perceiving that he is a man of remarkable ability; he has read much, especially of modern literature, travelled much, and seen much of the world of men, as well as of books.”²

¹ Charles A. Dana related to the author the following incident, which occurred some time after Seward retired from public life. Dana and Seward, in the accustomed room at the Astor House, were enjoying their reminiscences over a bottle of brandy when the card of Archbishop Hughes was brought up. Seward checked the conversation, ordered the servant to remove the brandy and place a pitcher of ice-water in its stead; then to his guest he said, “Dana, good-bye,” and to the servant, “Let his Grace enter.”

² 1 *Federal States*, 280.

CHAPTER XLIV

TRAVELS AND SUNSET, 1869-72.—SOME CONCLUSIONS

SEWARD resolved to employ in extensive travel the better part of the strength and time that were likely to be his after retirement, March 5, 1869. His friends were surprised, and politely hinted that he could not endure the fatigue of a long journey. Although physically a broken-down old man, who could not get on without a valet, he seemed to be as unwilling as ever to recognize that anything was impossible for him. Formerly, his trips had generally been undertaken to indulge a fancy or to satisfy a taste while escaping from the routine of politics or law. Now, he wished to observe natural phenomena, to study questions, to see places and nations that had long been of great interest to him. Of course Alaska attracted his attention. Then, too, the Pacific Railroad, an enterprise to the advancement of which he had given much time and thought, had just been completed. It passed through states and territories that he had never seen, although he was long their antislavery champion. To the south lay Mexico, barely recovered from the disorders wrought by European soldiers and the dreamy, unfortunate Maximilian. She had already invited Seward to pay her a visit as the guest of the nation, for she knew who had done most to save her both from murderous assailants and from friends that would have come as allies, but might have remained as conquerors. Beyond the Pacific were many peoples and civilizations

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and industries that had often occupied his thoughts and excited his curiosity. China and Japan regarded the government of the United States as very friendly; and all but the most ignorant persons, even there, had heard of the civil war in the United States and of the Secretary of State that had so narrowly escaped death when Lincoln was assassinated. As was the case with Li Hung Chang, the attempt upon Seward's life had increased his fame abroad as perhaps nothing else could have done.

Here were attractions enough to induce him to leave the quiet and comfort of home, and to risk all climates and to endure at times the roughest and most primitive means of travel. But probably there were other considerations. Notwithstanding his many successes and cheerful disposition, Seward was a very-much-disappointed man, although not a sad one. The years with Johnson were a period of great anxiety and dissatisfaction. Even most of the popularity won in Lincoln's administration had disappeared since 1865. It were strange if he had not often been reminded that a prophet is not without honor, save in his own country. The attentions that foreigners would surely bestow upon him would be pleasing evidence of his real fame and success in the world; and those attentions might help to bring his own countrymen to a fairer appreciation of his services.¹ Long absence from home and politics would at least give him new thoughts and pleasant experiences.

The fountain of his optimism continued to flow.

¹ One of his earliest letters, written after returning to Auburn in March, 1869, said, significantly: "It is marvellous to see how popular it makes a man to retire from public life." Then a little later: "Several newspapers begin to relent and relax on foreign affairs, and signs of toleration of our own policy are becoming more frequent."—3 Seward, 401, 402.

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journey began in June, 1869. The
 of Seward and his negro valet, Mr.
 W. Seward, and Abijah Fitch, of
 the Missouri river almost everything
 strange. While enjoying all the comforts
 of railway travel, they hastened across the
 catching sight of many evidences of savage life
 camps, buffaloes and buffalo bones, antelopes,
 dogs, and jack-rabbits. Every phase of life
 to please Seward. Salt Lake City was especially
 legible, and Brigham Young, who had once been a
 journeyman carpenter in Auburn, showed the travelers
 much attention and answered their inquiries with ap-
 parent frankness. After a halt of a few days at Sa-
 cramento, where they were entertained by the state
 officials, they proceeded to San Francisco. California
 regarded Seward as a great benefactor as well as a great
 man; therefore, the citizens of San Francisco welcomed
 him with more cordiality and gratitude than they had
 ever before shown to any visitor.

Hearing that Seward thought of going to Alaska,
 Ben Holliday put at his service a ship fully equipped
 for the trip. Some California friends were invited to
 join the original party, and the *Active* started about the
 middle of July to visit "Seward's Arctic Province."
 They stopped at Victoria, on Vancouver's Island, and
 then made a side-trip up Puget Sound to visit settle-

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ments in Washington territory. The voyage to Alaska was by the inland passage "through an archipelago of islands, straits, and sounds." By the end of July the *Active* reached Sitka, where a few days were spent in the study of the strange life of a Russian and Indian provincial settlement.

Jefferson C. Davis was in command of the United States troops in Alaska. The Chilcat Indians, who lived a few days' journey by water farther north, had given these troops much trouble, but now desired peace. So it was decided that General Davis and staff should go with the travelers on the *Active* to visit these Indians. The strange notions of the savages afforded great amusement.¹ A scientific party from the United States was near by, prepared to observe the total eclipse of the sun. The tourists and many of the Indians gathered about the scientists at the important hour. When the shadow began to pass over the sun the Indians thought that it was caused by the instruments used by "the Boston men," as the astronomers were called. Some of the Chilcats became greatly alarmed by the darkness and fell on their knees and prayed. When the shadow passed off they were relieved and thought that "the Boston men" were more wonderful than ever. A little later the visitors were invited to meet the principal men of the Chilcat tribe. The Indians supposed that Seward was their "Great Tyee" (supreme ruler), and they appealed to him to decree that nine Sitka Indians should be killed to avenge the murder of three Chilcats of the chief's family. When Seward learned that the Chilcats had been slain before Alaska was purchased, he thought it would suffice to tell the council that they ought to have appealed to the Emperor of Russia. They replied that they had done so in vain.

¹ S Seward, 426 ff.

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Finally, they agreed to be satisfied if the Great Tyee should cause thirty-six blankets to be sent to them—reckoning four blankets as equivalent to each of the nine Sitka Indians demanded as a peace-offering. The blankets could easily be given from the United States supplies at Sitka. So General Davis authorized compliance with the request. To make the very practical joke thoroughly effective, the Indians were instructed to appoint commissioners to proceed to Sitka to receive the blankets and to exchange tokens of friendship with their late enemies. The outcome pleased the savages as much as it amused the Americans. And the successful negotiations were celebrated on board the *Active* by a banquet attended by the tourists, “the Boston men,” and the Chilcats dressed in their gayest attire.

When Seward returned to Sitka he was called upon to make a public address expressing his impressions of Alaska.¹ He was, of course, enthusiastic. “In the early mornings and in the late evenings peculiar to the season I have lost myself,” he said, “in admiration of skies adorned with sapphire and gold as richly as those which are reflected by the Mediterranean.” “The thermometer tells the whole case when it reports that the summer is colder and the winter is warmer in Alaska than in New York and Washington.” He thought it would be impossible to exaggerate the marine treasures of the territory. He regarded the forests as hardly less wonderful and useful. “The elk and the deer are so plenty as to be undervalued for food or skins, by natives as well as strangers. The bear of many families—black, grizzly, and cinnamon; the mountain-sheep, inestimable for his fleece; the wolf, the fox, the beaver, the otter, the mink, the raccoon, the marten, the ermine; the squirrel—gray, black, brown, and flying, are among

¹ 5 *Works*, 559–69.

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the fur-bearing animals." He claimed that the explorations had already shown that Alaska possessed treasures in the baser ores equal to any other region of the continent. The scenery passed in his voyage seemed "like a varied and magnificent panorama," bordered with coast-range mountains rising to an exalted height and clothed with eternal snows and crystalline glaciers. Because other nations were exhausting their mines and forests, he believed that Alaska, British Columbia, Oregon, and Washington were "destined to become a shipyard for the supply of all nations." After all the ridicule of "Seward's polar regions," it was a ludicrous fact, which he did not fail to notice, that a California company had found the climate about Sitka too mild to produce ice of sufficient thickness. This speech and later ones showed that he traveled with a keen eye and an inquiring mind.¹

After returning to San Francisco the party took a steamer to the southern extremity of California. Mexico had renewed her invitation, and Seward decided to accept it. So he entered that country at Manzanillo, on the Gulf of California, early in October, 1869; and the party sailed from Vera Cruz, on the Gulf of Mexico, three months later. During this time Seward was the guest of the nation, and he received honors such as the Mexicans had never before bestowed upon any foreigner—or perhaps, indeed, upon any person whatsoever. The demonstrations of popular enthusiasm and gratitude were not less than those for Lafayette when he returned to the United States in 1824. In fact, there were many points of similarity between the two incidents. Lafayette's services to the United States had been more picturesque, but Seward's to Mexico were more critical

¹ He spoke at Victoria of "The North Pacific Coast," and at Salem, Oregon, of "Our North Pacific States."—5 *Works*, 569, 572.

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and decisive. During the visit Seward was constantly accompanied by a special escort on behalf of the national government, and this was often increased by committees from different state and local governments. Large numbers of cavalry attended him for long distances in his overland journey. The hamlets and cities through which he passed were decorated with flags and mottoes, and the inhabitants thronged the streets and welcomed him with shouts of praise and benediction.¹ Wherever the party stopped for a day or more a fully equipped house was generally put at their disposition. His coming made a fête-day; and public receptions, banquets, balls, bull-fights, serenades, and parades were given in the spirit of Spanish hospitality and festivity. The National Academy of Sciences made him an honorary member, with the title of "Defender of the Liberty of the Americas," and he was presented with an original proclamation issued by Charles II. in 1676. Naturally the climax of display occurred in the City of Mexico, where President Juarez and the officials of the national government entertained him as lavishly as kings do their royal guests.

Seward seems to have keenly enjoyed these many demonstrations of respect and affection. He had no special message to communicate, but at different times he expressed the hope that the United States and the Spanish-American republics might come into a closer moral reliance, "to the end that all external aggression

¹ As he passed through the little Indian village of Techaluta, where the people, being too poor to buy decorations for their houses, used such wearing apparel as bright-colored blankets and shawls and scarfs and ribbons. They greeted him, in Spanish, with "God bless you!" "Heaven protect you!" "A thousand thanks, sir!" and presented a scroll of paper addressed "To the great statesman of the great Republic of the North—Techaluta is poor, but she is not ungrateful."—Seward, 446.

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may be prevented, and that internal peace, law and order, and progress may be secured throughout the whole continent."

Early in 1870 he took passage from Mexico to Havana, and spent about a month in Cuba. When he reached Baltimore, late in February, many friends from Washington, Philadelphia, and New York were there to greet him. During two weeks spent in New York city he found that much of his old-time popularity had revived. Deputations from different organizations called to express their admiration and to congratulate him on his prosperous journey.

The spring and most of the summer of 1870 were quietly passed in Auburn. Before June had elapsed he wrote of having "concerted a plan of travel, of a year or more, in Asiatic countries, not forgetting my favorite scheme of visiting South America." The South American part was never to be realized, but the trip around the world began in August, 1870. Physically he was weaker than in the previous year, but to friends expressing misgivings about his setting out again he replied, "Travel improves health instead of exhausting it." He was accompanied by his adopted daughter, Miss Olive Risley Seward, her sister, Miss Risley, and two or three servants.¹

Seward was the first famous American politician to make what might be called a public voyage around the world. Almost everywhere in the Orient he was treated with royal distinction, and he was looked upon by the rulers and the people as the greatest of living Americans. In Japan the Mikado showed him what was intended to be a great honor: he received Seward in a private lodge, instead of a public court, and for the first time com-

¹ *William H. Seward's Travels Around the World*, edited by Olive Risley Seward, gives the particulars of this trip.

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pletely unveiled himself to a visitor. In China, Seward was given interviews with Prince Kung, the regent who exercised political sovereignty, and with the Chinese Cabinet. The manner in which he had treated both Japan and China caused him to be regarded as a special friend. Perhaps it was merely Oriental politeness, but the United States legation was informed that the Chinese Ministers of State had never before given a stranger so unrestrained a welcome. In a speech made at the American consulate at Hong-Kong, Seward expressed the belief that the regeneration of China was to be brought about by means of commerce, which would come across the American continent and the Pacific ocean. "The United States must send her steam-engines and agricultural implements, and bring away her coolies."¹

The travelers went as far south as the island of Java. There they were the guests of the Governor-General, and were taken on a long excursion by stage into the interior, where they saw many strange phenomena both of nature and of civilization. At Calcutta the East India Railway Company furnished them with a special car for their use in that country. They made a long trip to the north of India, up to within sight of the Himalayas. Perhaps the most weird and interesting experience of their whole journey was at Putteeala, where the native prince of the province made a holiday display which could hardly have been surpassed if his guest had been Queen Victoria. Seward entered the city in a state coach drawn by six white horses. The other members of his party mounted upon the backs of elephants, "richly caparisoned in cloth of gold and scarlet, all ornamented with gilt earrings and necklaces." A train of about sixty elephants and five hundred horsemen

¹ *Travels*, 278, 282.

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followed. Ten thousand troops were passed in review. The visitors were given a palace for their use, and on the following day they were entertained by Indian displays and attentions of various kinds. About ten weeks were spent in India.

The party sailed from Bombay to Suez, where the Khedive furnished them with a special train to Cairo. Later they were entertained by the Khedive at his palace and furnished with a steamer for a long excursion up the Nile. In Turkey they were everywhere treated as the guests of the Empire, and the Sultan received Seward. In Austria Count von Beust gave a public dinner in honor of the ex-Secretary of State. In Rome the Pope granted Seward an audience such as had formerly been accorded only to sovereigns and princes.¹

The party found Paris in disorder and almost in ruins, as a result of the Franco-German war and of the more destructive work of the Commune. The public men of the new government were remarkably attentive to Seward, considering the time. Thiers, on the first day of his presidency of the French Republic, entertained the traveler. Drouyn de Lhuys, who had learned to fear Seward as an opponent in diplomacy, now met him with frankness and cordiality. Seward expressed regret that it was physically impossible for him to grasp and shake the hand held out to him. The Frenchman recalled the fact that in the days of their antagonism Seward had sent him some excellent cigars.²

Returning to the United States by way of Germany and England, Seward was again in Auburn the second week in October, 1871, after an absence of fourteen months. Once more a crowd of friends greeted him at

¹ *Travels*, 733.

² *Godey's Magazine*, March, 1894, pp. 262, 263.

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the station. In one paragraph of his brief speech to them he said:

“My friends, we are met together, I trust, not to part again. I have had a long journey, which, in its inception, seemed to many to be eccentric, but I trust that all my neighbors and friends are now satisfied that it was reasonable. . . . I found that at my age, and in my condition of health, ‘rest was rust’; and nothing remained, to prevent rust, but to keep in motion. I selected the way that would do the least harm, give the least offence, enable me to acquire the most knowledge, and increase the power, if any remained, to do good.”¹

About this time it was apparent that Seward’s day was near its close, and that the twilight would not be long. Paralysis had attacked his arms, so that they were, or soon became, quite useless. He could still walk, but even this power was to be lost in the near future. Hardly any decline in his intellectual faculties was perceptible. He continued to be cheerful and genial, and ambitious to accomplish something more. He received many invitations to make public addresses in different places, but compliance was impossible. The only activity he could endure was mental, and this must in the nature of the case be chiefly reminiscent. So he began an autobiography in October, 1871. The progress made in the next eight or ten weeks, and the style and accuracy of what he dictated, show that his mind was still clear and vigorous. After covering the first thirty-three years of his life, he decided to lay aside the autobiography and to write an account of the trip around the world while his impressions were still vivid. Notes of the journey had been made from day to day by the aid of his adopted daughter; and during the first eight months of 1872 the octavo volume of nearly eight hun-

¹ *Travels*, 778.

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dred pages was prepared for the press. It appeared the following year, and had so large a sale that it brought his estate over fifty thousand dollars.¹

For the first time in half a century a presidential contest had but little interest for him. In that of 1872, one party was led by his old personal enemy, Greeley, and the other by President Grant, whose reconstruction policy he had never approved of, although he had voted for Grant in 1868 as a choice between two evils. If the plan to make Charles Francis Adams the presidential candidate of both the Liberal Republicans and of the Democrats had not miscarried, probably Seward would have favored his election. In the spring of 1872 Seward said: "I have ceased to be a partisan; and have no desire to surrender my independence, or impartiality, to the dictates of any party that I now see around me."² Undoubtedly he would have preferred Grant to Greeley, but he had already voted for the last time.

The summer of 1872 was spent with his son and namesake, in the attractive cottage, "Woodside," by Owasco lake, a few miles from Auburn. He daily found pleasure in an afternoon drive in sight of one of his "silvery lakes," where the setting sun sometimes gives hills and clouds and water the richest colors seen in Italy. His fondness for a rubber of whist in the evening continued long after he was able to handle the cards. He still welcomed old friends and had many a long and interesting conversation.³ One who saw him about this time wrote: "His head and heart were unchanged, but the poor limbs were all stricken. . . . He could not take our hands, nor even nod his head; but

¹ Derby's *Fifty Years Among Authors, Books, and Publishers*, 84.

² Seward, 479.

³ Charles K. Tuckerman gives an account of a visit made in July, 1872, when they sat on the veranda and talked and smoked until after midnight.—1 Tuckerman's *Memoirs*, 122.

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when we turned for one more good-bye look, he was still smiling, and so I ever picture him.”¹

In the morning of October 10, 1872, he and his adopted daughter were occupied as usual in literary work. Later, as he lay resting upon the lounge, breathing became very difficult, at first supposed to be due to a slight cold. When his physician told him that the end was at hand, he received it with a placid smile such as he had often given in years past, whether the news was good or ill. At four o'clock that afternoon he died peacefully, surrounded by his family.

The excellence and success of Seward's career were mainly due to his superior ideals and his skill in practical politics. Both his natural radicalism and his political insight made him progressive; he knew that no one could prove mistakes about theories and plans for the future. This characteristic was the source of much of his popularity as well as the main-spring of some of his greatest miscalculations; it led him to appeal to the national treasury instead of solving the difficulties of state finances; to seek relief in foreign wars rather than to deal directly with secession; to urge the consideration of questions of national expansion in place of trying to remedy social and political disorganization in the southern states. As chief of the opposition he was both adroit and daring; he made few mistakes, and usually brought about better results than probably any other contemporary could have done. This was because he knew when to drop the theoretical for the practical; he was master of all the usual weapons, and had no equal as a popular expounder of politico-antislavery doctrines. He had greater fertility than depth of thought, although he was often truly profound. He was pre-eminently a man

¹ 63 *Atlantic Monthly*, 397.

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of theories and expedients, but he also had settled convictions and sound judgment. The foremost aim of his life was to be supremely great both in his generation and in history. It is now agreed that he was strongly individual, very influential, fascinating, able, and resourceful; but it was Lincoln that was thoroughly great.

Personally Seward was most amiable. Devoted and tender in all domestic relations, he was an appreciative and faithful friend, generous and interesting as a host, affable to strangers, considerate with inferiors and even with political bores—across hundreds of whose letters he wrote, for the direction of his secretary, "Acknowledge kindly," or something similar. As Lincoln said, he was "a man without gall." With but two or three exceptions, the public and private records of his half-century of political activity contain no trace of malice toward contemporaries; it was his life-long custom to avoid recording or even saying anything disparaging of either colleagues or opponents. How superior, in this respect, he was to Jefferson, Sumner, Chase, Stanton, and many others! Hence it is not strange that he often had warm friends among his political enemies. Although he joined the Episcopal Church at the age of thirty-six, he was not what would be called a religious man; he can best be described as a moral man of the world. The amusing story that Lincoln guessed a new acquaintance was an Episcopalian because he swore like Seward, is entirely plausible; yet Seward was not coarse, but quite the contrary. By education, association, and in the quality of his thoughts he was as conspicuously a gentleman as he was a man of brains. Although very calculating, he was also very human.

The reason Seward has not been fully appreciated is found in the fact that the average person more easily grasps and retains what is simple and direct: brilliancy and power may stir admiration, but not affection; an

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intricate nature makes less appeal because less understood. Cromwell, Washington, Calhoun, and Grant hold their distinct places in popular regard; Voltaire, Napoleon, and Gladstone, on account of the complexities of their characters and their activities, have created much less than an adequate impression. Seward was an agitator, a politician, and a statesman, all in one. His irresistible impulse to pose and explain and appear all-wise and all-important earned for him a reputation for insincerity and egotism. A perfectly fair-minded contemporary gave this answer to a question: "I did not regard Seward as exactly insincere; we generally knew at what hole he would go in, but we never felt quite sure as to where he would come out." It is a paradox that precisely explains the paradoxical Seward. The variety of his resources weakened the impression and quality of his moral and intellectual strength.

Notwithstanding his limitations, Seward stands in the front rank of political leaders, both on account of the talents he displayed and the services he rendered to his country. And he holds the first place among all our Secretaries of State. Sumner had a more thorough knowledge of international law; Adams was by birth and education equipped for diplomacy; Chase had a genius for managing national finances in a critical time. Stanton was the broad and tireless organizer of the physical forces that saved the nation. Seward had dash, a knowledge of political conditions, and a versatility such as none of these men possessed, while his perfect tact and vigor of intellect, his enthusiasm and inspiring hope, made him the almost perfect supplement to Lincoln. The Secretary grew in diplomacy as the President grew in statesmanship. Although large numbers of Seward's earlier admirers deserted him, and criticism succeeded adulation when his ambition ceased to be partisan and personal, his conduct of the work of his office was rarely



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assailed, and never successfully. With few exceptions, the bitter attacks so frequently made during his secretaryship related to matters outside the sphere of the Department of State, and were largely inspired by resentment at his supposed influence over Lincoln or Johnson. While Secretary he negotiated more than forty treaties or conventions; and if the Johnson-Clarendon convention had been approved—and it was not his fault that it failed—he could have said that for eight years he had safely piloted the government past every great foreign danger, and had left the United States in a much better condition in regard to all other nations than when he came into office.



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A

GARRISON to ROSS

"BOSTON, August 25, 1875.

"DEAR SIR,—Your letter, in reply to mine, has just been received.

"I beg to be understood. In recording in your book what John Brown is said to have uttered concerning the Northern abolitionists, I did not suppose that you endorsed his sentiments, but published them rather to show how intensely concentrated was his mind upon his own method of operations. Still, their absurdity and injustice are none the less obvious, and quite derogatory to his moral discernment; and as, out of regard to his memory, it would have been a friendly act not to have printed them, so it will be none the less friendly and judicious on your part to suppress them in the new edition of your work, as you intend doing. He will be better appreciated by the omission.

"The truth is, John Brown was exactly fitted for the enterprise he undertook to achieve. He believed in the method of Joshua rather than that of Jesus—in the sword of Gideon rather than the sword of the Spirit—in powder and ball rather than any moral instrumentalities; and he acted accordingly, being as willing to be led to the stake or the gallows as any martyr or patriot of other days; acting all the while under the deepest religious convictions. While in prison, awaiting his execution, he evidently had his spiritual vision somewhat purged; for, writing to a Quaker lady in Rhode Island, he said: 'You know that Christ

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once armed Peter [a mistake, for the occasion referred to inculcates a very different lesson]; so also I think in my case He put a sword into my hand, and there continued it as long as He saw best, and then *kindly took it from me* [a marked paradox]; I mean when I first went to Kansas. I wish you could know with what cheerfulness I am now wielding "the sword of the Spirit" on the right hand and on the left. I bless God that it proves "mighty to the pulling down of strongholds." Yes, his power over men's hearts, on both sides of the Atlantic, emanated from his prison through the spirit he displayed and the grand words he wrote in his numerous letters. Had he been killed outright, with a musket in his hand, at Harper's Ferry, the world would have regarded him as simply or little better than insane. At the time, I said in the *Liberator*: 'By the logic of Concord, Lexington, and Bunker Hill, and by the principles enunciated by this nation in its Declaration of Independence, Captain Brown was a hero, to be justified in all that he aimed to achieve, however lacking in sound discretion.' I always endeavored to deal tenderly and generously with him, though not in accord with his martial policy.

"Very truly yours,

"WM. LLOYD GARRISON.

"DR. A. M. ROSS."

—MS.

B

MOSES H. GRINNELL to SEWARD

"NEW YORK, *January 28, 1861.*

"MY DEAR GOV.,—The committee of twenty-five go on this morn'g. They take with them a very large petition having many thousand names appended.

"There is a very deep and anxious feeling growing up here in regard to the border states, the sentiment is strong that if the border states withdraw, the Union *is* gone, and therefore if concessions are to be made, it must be done to save them. Unless the Northern people are satisfied that proper offers have been made to the border states (in case they should go out) there cannot be any unanimity in support of the gov't in the event of a civil war. It cannot be denied that there is a want of *unity*

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amongst our people, and I am free to confess, that many of our Republican friends have strong sympathies with those who are ready to yield to either the Crittenden or *border state* propositions.

"I begin to despair of an amicable settlement, things have gone too far, the Cotton States it is true are too mad to negotiate with, and the border states sympathize so strongly with them that I see but little chance.

"To my mind it is clear that the new Administration is to have a hard time of it, and unless the border states are with us we might as well make up our minds to separate, for there is a very powerful opposition to *coercion*, especially if the whole South were united. We were more united in this quarter *three* weeks ago than *now*."—Seward MSS.

C

W. D. MOSS to SEWARD

"MOUNDSVILLE, VA., February 6, 1861.

"MY DEAR SIR,—As I wrote you some days ago, we have scarcely left a vestige of secession in Western Virginia, and very little indeed in any part of the state. The success of the friends of the Union, has really astonished us all. The vote has been overwhelming against secession under any circumstances. This was the issue made here, and our candidate received nearly six to one. Not a single secessionist, or 'conditional Union' man, has been returned in Virginia west of the Blue Ridge. The Gulf Confederacy can count Virginia out of their little family arrangement—*she will never* join them. The election of Monday, cannot be regarded in any other light than an effectual check upon secession. The example of Virginia, will be potent with her sister border states, and without these six important states the squad of traitors in the extreme South cannot exist.

"There will be a desperate effort with counties, to throw Virginia prospectively [?] out, but even this will be defeated. The matter will have to be referred to the people for action, and the popular vote indicates a heavy majority against secession, to-day, tomorrow, and forever! A majority of the delegates elected will, I think, be found to be against secession without contin-

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gency or mental reservation. This, I know, will be the case in the northwest. The result in Harper's Ferry district [?], (Jefferson County), if correctly reported, is remarkable. Hunter who is after the late Judge Davis' place, avowed himself unconditionally for secession. His defeat is a just rebuke.

"We will endeavor to secure a Western man, Stuart, Summers, or some other equally good Union man as President of Convention."—Seward MSS.

D

JOHN PENDLETON to SEWARD

"REDWOOD, *February 8, 1861.*

"I dropped you a hasty note a few days ago, . . . I told you how we would carry the state in the convention election. The result is that there will not be twenty immediate and unqualified secessionists and disunionists, in the body of one hundred and fifty. And it is equally certain, there will not be one man in it, who is not for a final separation of the states, in double quick time—unless there is reason to hope for a perfectly full, final and unqualified surrender of the slavery question to those whom it concerns.

"Had we received a little more decisive encouragement from our Northern friends there is not a county in Virginia that would have elected a secessionist. I would like to know from you your opinion of the present promise of things. And I would write you very fully, but I know you have no time to read my letter. Our whole batch of old Demagogues will be swept from the field, if this matter is settled. Millson and probably Hunter may survive."—Seward MSS.

E

JAMES BARBOUR to SEWARD

"CULPEPER, *February 8, 1861.*

"The very kind manner in which you received my suggestions when in Washington and the patriotic purpose expressed by you encouraged me to address this letter to you.

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"It's important that you should understand the true condition of political affairs in this state. There is a shrewd, energetic, intellectual body of gentlemen in this state who belong to the So. Carolina school of politics. By force of talent and industry they generally control the Democratic party organization except when boldly and shrewdly opposed. Recent occurrences have placed these gentlemen in full sympathy with the masses of the people in Eastern Va. and in all the central and southern portions of Western Va. Unquestionably they would have carried the recent election if we had not been able to hold out tolerable evidences that there was a hope of obtaining by radical appeals to the Northern people constitutional guaranties of our slave property rights. We had to place our men in the recent contest upon that ground, and concede that secession ought to follow the extinction of the hope of constitutional amendments. I for one assumed that ground not only as expedient for the canvass but as right in itself as did many others. Upon that ground most of those called Union men prevailed. Men like Mr. Botts who took the unconditional Union ground went down generally. The most potent campaign paper in this part of the state was the statement of Messrs. Douglas and Crittenden that an adjustment was to be expected. If these representations are disappointed our men (called Union men in the election returns) will become determined unconditional secessionists. They are men in earnest—devoted to the Union and would mourn over its loss as a private grief. But they are resolute to shiver the bond if their effort to get guaranties fails. It is a noble and gallant body of gentlemen. The people of the Northern states have the political fortunes of these gentlemen as well as the destinies of this Union in their hands. If you meet our efforts in the spirit in which we made them everything is safe. If you stand back and leave us unsupported in this great contest the secession of Va. is as inevitable as fate. I tell you this as no menace *but as a fact* upon the knowledge of which you ought to direct your actions and that of your friends. Come forward promptly with liberal concessions—make the Va. power and influence the potent instrument of saving the Union. So arrange it as to secure the credit in fact at least to the conservative influences of this state and you at once clothe those influences with the power to recall the

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departing states. You may lose a portion of your own party North. But you place yourself and the new administration at the head of a national conservative party which will domineer over all other party organizations North and South yet many years to come. You above all men have it in your power to bring the really conservative elements North and South into an organization the most useful and the most peaceful yet seen in this country. But to be done at all this must be done promptly. You can make a shield of the peace commission at Washington. Make them lay down a basis of safety to our property owners upon which we can rally all the conservative influences North and South. Let them construct the platform upon which the shrewd partisan and the wise patriot can zealously unite. You can render a vast service to the country and to your own reputation. If at any moment I can be made instrumental in accomplishing this great purpose by going to Washington my friend Hon. John T. Harris of Va. will call me there."—Seward MSS.

F

SHERRARD CLEMENS to —.

"SPOTSWOOD HOUSE, RICHMOND, *February 18, 1861.*

"It is about as much as I can do to get to and from the convention in consequence of my leg which has again broken out. I am therefore disqualified from taking any active measures in regard to the matter you mention.

"If the Republicans in Congress and in the Peace Conference *do not promptly and at once abandon* the positions they have taken, there will be no Union party left in Virginia. We are struggling here against every obstacle, and Mr. Lincoln, by his speech in the North, has done us vast harm. If he will not be guided by Mr. Seward but puts himself in the hands of Mr. Chase and the ultra Republicans, nothing can save the cause of the Union in the South. Instead of circulating documents, it will be far better, to take care of your own friends, who are stabbing us every hour. Bingham of Ohio, and his force bill has done us more injury than an invading army. Show this letter to him and other wild men who conceive that *their* policy

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and *their* principle, if enforced by the government will save us from danger. If they knew how the secessionists chuckled over them, as honest fools, they would awaken from the deep dream, which has sealed up their faculties. Let them see themselves as others see them.

"Many Republicans know me. They know the force of my character and words. If they choose to commit suicide let them blame themselves alone."—Seward MSS.

G

THOMAS FITZAN to SEWARD

"WASHINGTON, February 19, 1861.

. . . "Need I therefore repeat to you what I have already reported to you of them [the opinion of people irrespective of parties], that they looked to *you* for the prompt settlement of existing national troubles and the more so now since they disapprove of Mr. Lincoln's recent railroad speeches. As his Secretary of State, on you will devolve the main responsibility of national affairs. Once in that position you can defy your personal foes, and mould all measures necessary to promote the perman[en]cy of the Union to suit the hopes and expectations of the country. All *old* party platforms are now either breaking down or [are] being swallowed up in the universal desire of the people to save the republic from dissolution, and a new one, constructed upon Union principles *per se* will inevitably spring up after the 4th of next March. *It is for you to take the lead or not in the movement.* If you decide in the affirmative, the extreme men of the North and South will have to be thrown off and made subordinate to the *centre*, or conservative Union party. *I do not hesitate to say, that no public man in this or any other country, has ever been placed in a better position than you are now, either for weal or woe of the human race.* It is for you to say what shall be done. You, all know, are competent to decide; no man is more so, and I am sure you will solve and determine the difficulty in the right way, be the sacrifices of by-gone party principles what they may." . . .—Seward MSS.

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H

ALFRED M. BARBOUR to SEWARD

"Private and confidential."

"SPOTSWOOD HOUSE, RICHMOND, VIRGINIA, *February 21, 1861.*

"DEAR SIR,—The messenger you spoke of to my brother James did not come. Write us soon. Let us hear from you. The matter you mentioned about a raid upon the capitol from Va. is a humbug. I have inquired specially. Nothing is thought of [it] in Virginia. This convention is a body of great personal worth and character—too high toned to do anything which looks like a disgrace. Don't let anybody excite your friends with such stuff. You gentlemen of the Republican party ought to suppress excitement against us. Force bills can do your people no good, and yet paralyze the Union men here. It is very cruel to crush us. In telegraphing you we (my brother James and myself) will call [use?] the name of our mutual friend M. M. Dent who is entirely reliable and a member. In corresponding you would do well to use some mutual friend's frank such as — [illegible] or John T. Harris, Millson or Boteler or any not publicly prominent member of your party. You understand this. Or just *stamp* your letters. You appreciate the necessity of our not appearing to be in conference with Mr. Lincoln's cabinet. Don't take this in any sense than that of policy."—Seward MSS.

I

JOSEPH SEGAR to SEWARD

"WASHINGTON, *Feb. 21, 1861.*

"I am, as, I suppose, you [are] aware, a member of the House of Delegates of Va., as well charged with the sentiment of the Legislature and the Convention now sitting in Richmond, and with the general sentiment of my state as, perhaps, any one individual within her limits; and charged with the sentiment, I, an ardent friend of the Union, desire to say to you, another friend of the Union, that the passage *now* of what is termed

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the 'force bill' will have, in Virginia, a most unhappy effect. We are now conservative. We have demonstrated, by our acts, our ardent desire to preserve the Union of the states, as it came to us from our fathers. The passage of this force bill will take from us the strong foothold that we have. It will cause the disunionists in Virginia, in Congress and out of it, to clap their hands with joy at the passage of this measure. There is a strong states-right vein running through the sentiment of our people, and a most determined opposition to coercion. The success of this measure will be regarded as looking to coercion and will wound the sensibilities of our people.

"For God's sake, and for the country's sake do nothing, and let nothing be done, to weaken the position of the conservatives the Union men of Virginia. Strengthen us—give us ground to stand on. Above all things prevent the passage of this bill, and all will yet be well. Give 'no aid and comfort' to our enemy.

"I had designed to see you in person, but I am compelled to return to Richmond to-night, and so drop you this hasty line to be used as you see fit."—Seward MSS.

J

F. W. LANDER to SEWARD

"FRIDAY NIGHT, 12 M. RICHMOND, VA., Feb. 22d. [1861.]

"I shall be back on Saturday. It was out of place for me to leave while anything was to be heard or gained. I have to say that the old *Whig* element is here strongly in the preponderance. It is divided into two classes. The older and more prominent men, whom it is urged here are seeking office as the result of their patriotic efforts, are in a measure opposed by a younger set of talented and rising individuals who still do not affiliate with the secessionists. It is the latter class who may yet follow the excesses of the extreme Southern movement and aid in the passage of secession resolutions. But the last-named conservatives will be guided much by public events. The passage of a Force bill by Congress would probably drive them into the ranks of the extremists. There is an evident disposition of these conservatives to hear the inaugural of the President elect. If that

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is openly conservative, and an extra session of Congress is called by him, no *extreme* measures can pass here. Moderate men urge that this convention is composed of the most conservative men of the state, and that thus its conclusions, pro or con, will be ratified by the people.

"The extreme radicals greatly fear some conservative course by the President elect. They have lost much ground by his silence (*of late*) on existing public affairs. A prominent Whig editor of an influential paper, although conservative, told me to-day that he should vote for the resolution against coercion. This resolution is now being fought through the committee on Federal relations. It will be reported to-morrow and adopted by a large vote.

"I have read letters from prominent Southern secessionists. Their projects cannot culminate to success without the aid of the border states. They have in view that New Mexico shall apply for admission as a state. Being refused from want of the quota of population necessary for a state, she will join the Southern Confederacy. Arizona will be accepted by the Southern seceding states. Utah will then be recognized, and thus it will be believed that the North will be shut out in its passage to California. California, in its southern portions, it is believed, will thus be practically revolutionized. When the recognition of the Southern Confederacy is made by England and France, Sonora and Mexico will be invaded. England and France are to be propitiated by their claim for a passage to the East Indies across the isthmus. The South rallies troops to take the isthmuses. It is urged that a movement is now progressing in southern California to perfect these movements. Thus they maintain the idea of a separate California confederacy which will eventually join the South. You must regard these arguments of no force. California will remain with that section which will build her overland railways. The magnitude of this programme has no weight against sound and reliable argument. But it is clear that Lincoln must extend his comprehension beyond the trifling question of the hour. He *must* secure the border slave-holding states to the present Union. It is absolutely necessary for him to pursue an extreme reactionary yet statesman-like course. He has passed through politics to government [*sic*]. Should he take the simple ground that until the will of the self-governed reacts he will not molest the people;

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should he even order Anderson and other officers out of the Southern forts, and, disclaiming the policy of practical surrendership of the U. S. property by receiving payment for it, leave the seceding states to the extremity of their own folly during the first of his administration; should he further recommend no action against the claims of the South as to territories, I believe that secession would be disarmed.

"On the other hand, if he proposes to fight the South as a foreign nation, holding the peninsula of Florida and the mouths of the Mississippi, and thereby aggressing on the South—here the old argument of the acquisition of Cuba to guard the Gulf being pertinent—if he proposes this—still he must have the support of the border states.

"And why? Why? Because the extreme radicals, the left hand of the Republican party, are not strong enough to sustain him. It is no longer party which demands action of him, but a country, a nation requesting from him a stern, unrelaxing grasp of the reins of government. It is expected here that Lincoln will call an extra session of Congress and afterwards advise a convention of the people. It is said that civil war can only grow out of his persistence in the idea that he is elected by a majority. This, it is avowed, he continues to dilate upon, forgetting that facts are stronger than arguments, mere declamation having no power against the figures that L. was 900,000 votes short of a majority, and that not one electoral vote was cast for him in the states whose peculiar interests are now at stake. It appears to me that the madness which creates revolutions refuses itself in this city to comprehend realities. Men say that it is in vain to declaim that the incoming President intends no wrong to Southern institutions, while the strength of his assertions on the construction of doubtful clauses of the Constitution are hardly dry on the manuscript which reports them.

"Whatever may be the course of Mr. L. it is necessary that he should keep silent until inaugurated. No good can issue from his declamations; much harm may come. Excuse the apparent rudeness of the remark."—Seward MSS.

"WASHINGTON, D. C., SUNDAY MORNING, *February 24, 1861.*

. . . "I arrived this morning. If you wish to see me to-day will come up by your apprising me. The committee on federal

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relations on the coercion resolutions failed to report Saturday as anticipated. They will report, it is said, on Tuesday, when a sharp debate will arise. Mr. Davidson a particular friend of Gov. Letcher is in town having come on with some half dozen gentlemen some of them delegates to the convention to pass the Sabbath. He can afford information, and requested me to introduce him to such public prominent men as I know here. He is regarded [as the] right hand man of Letcher, and is a strong friend of H. H. Stuart.

"A few young men came down with us 'who talked fight' but I am able to assure [you] so far as Virginia is concerned there is not the slightest danger of a collision. Even if coercion is decided on Va. will act with dignity and caution. But I have not heard one man say, not the most conservative man that Virginia will fail to follow the cotton states should she not receive great concessions. This is now said by men who declare that the issue is clearly a false one, unnecessary and forced on Va., but that now being made she can take no less. The time for argument is passed when to endeavor to reason away the facts accomplished by secession by saying it was and is unnecessary can have any weight in Virginia.

"The incoming President holds the whole matter in his hand. He can shape public opinion at the convention either way, for every one is disposed to await his inaugural."—Seward MSS.

K

SAMUEL WARD to SEWARD

[No date.]

"*Private.*

"HON. WM. H. SEWARD:

"MY DEAR SIR: The following extract from a letter I have this moment received from New York may interest you.

"'I wish I could think that there would be no fight at Pickens, but I am skeptical as to the possibility of preventing it. Benjamin writes Barlow (recd ys A. M.) [received yesterday morning] in the most emphatic manner as to the dissatisfaction

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of the Govt at Montgomery with things at Washington and their intention not to await events.'

"With great respect

"Your obedient servt,

(Signed) "SAML. WARD."

—Seward MSS.

[The following memoranda in Ward's handwriting were evidently written on the evening of March 4, 1861:]

[No. 1.]

"I visited Dr. G. [Gwin] this P.M. and found Senator Hunter in his study. Neither had read the inaugural and my ac of it confirmed the impression they had derived from Mr. Bright and another Senator whose name has escaped me. Whilst we were discussing the probable action of Va., which Dr. G. maintained *w'd not go out*; Constitution Browne came in from ye P.M. train—fresh from Montgomery. I purpose intruding upon you with the rough sketch of the salient facts and speculations of the dialogue which ensued.

"1. Mr. Davis had shown Browne a letter rec'd from Dr. G. some days since foreshadowing peaceful policy on the part of the incoming Admn. This announcement has given Dr. G. great satisfaction. He, too, was in favor of moderate measures and of eliminating angry words threats and bluster from 'the situation.'

"2. There is perfect unanimity in the Southern Congress—no jar; all is harmony. Tom Cobb a cleverer man than his brother is the leader of debate.

"3. Toombs is the master spirit of the new Government.

"4. Cabinet ministers are bound to keep their seats in Congress to defend their measures.

"5. No appropriation can be made by Congress without a recommendation from the Secy of the Treasury.

"6. The export duty on cotton is accepted with great cheerfulness. It is $\frac{1}{8}\%$ = 45 cts. a bale.

"7. The Commissioners to France will be Yancey, Judge Rost of ye Louisiana Supme Court and Dudley Mann. The latter doubtful because on bad terms with Slidell.

"8. In Alabama the appointment of Clemens to the army has drawn off a great deal of opposition.

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"9. In Tennessee Browne did not see a man woman or child who was not a submissionist. (Here he groaned in spirit.) In Virginia he found people shockingly submissionistic save at the University (Charlottesville I believe) and in Richmond.

No. 2.

"Mr. Crawford the commissioner is here alone. He has full powers without his two adjuncts or colleagues.

"He will instantly apply for a reception. If he goes back unacknowledged as commr Prest Davis cannot hold the people from attacking the forts.

"Dr. Gwin and Hunter think the question had best be referred to the Senate. They say it is a risk that you must take.

"You can rely upon 22 Democratic votes. You will have Baker, Simmons, Anthony, Foster Harris probably the two new Penna successors of Bigler and Cameron unless the country should be inflicted with Wilmot in place of one of them. This risk is, after all, an affair . . . [illegible]. You can doubtless count upon Douglas.

"Hunter observed that it was to be regretted that you could not leave your mantle upon the shoulders of a man of nerve to sustain your measures in the Senate. Baker was ready and willing but lacked position. He seemed to think Fessenden would be a great card to win to your hand and Dr. Gwin fancied, from some remarks of F's this morning, that, although you and F. were not exactly cordial and sympathetic he might be gained.

No. 3.

"Mr. Hunter remarked that Mr. Simmons's tariff would give the new Admn *no money* and produce a feeling of jealousy and perhaps war at the North as the Tariff of 1857 wd. bring mdse to Southern ports.

No. 4.

"Dr. G. desires to see you and begs you will be kind enough to send me word as early as you please to-morrow at what hour it will be convenient for you to meet him at 258.

"P. S.—The chief reason for recg [receiving?] ye Commissioners would be to gain time, allay irritation at the South, when her

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people would await patiently the result of negotiations,—being fully aware of the limited and finite powers of our Govt. for unforeseen cases.”

L

JOHN A. GILMER to SEWARD

“ *Confidential.*

“ GREENSBORO, N. C., *March 7, 1861.*

“ I was hurried from Washington by the extreme and dangerous illness of a member of my family. This prevented me from having some conversation with you that I much desired.

“ I am here in the very midst of the South, and I beg you to weigh well the suggestions which I make to you.

“ The seceders in the border states and throughout the south ardently desire some collision of arms in attempts to collect the revenue or in some way about the fortifications.

“ The very best thing that the administration can do will be to frame some excuse to withdraw the troops from all the southern fortifications in the seceding states—such as that Congress failed to give the necessary legislation to do this successfully, and that they must wait such provisioning as Congress may hereafter provide &c.

“ There must be no fighting or the conservative Union men in the border slave states of N. C., Tenn., Mo., Ky., Va., Md. and Del. who are at this time largely in the majority, will be swept away in a torrent of madness.

“ For the time being every effort should be made to strengthen the hands of the Union men in these border states, and even in Arkansas. Let this crisis pass. Let the Union seem quietly to settle down with the free states and the border slave states. Let these border slave states pass out of the hands of the secessionists, Governors, legislators &c. into the hands of the Union Conservative men and then if coercion be deemed wise it can be attempted without harm to the border states, that are now mostly in the hands of ultra-extreme rulers. These states by wise management on the part of the administration can be got into the hands of Union men, before the lapse of sufficient time to be construed into acquiescence in secession. That secured

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which I have indicated the more [the] treachery and plundering and lawless conduct on the part of the seceding states in the mean[time], will only make the Union men in the border states be more inclined to unite cordially with the free states, to bring the seceding states to their senses.

"If collision can be avoided—and the most vigilant care must be practiced to this end—Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana and even Texas will . . . [six words illegible] for returning to the Union. S. C. will not remain in harmony long in any confederacy. You have a mighty storm to control. If your advice prevails I believe it can pass without further harm.

"If Virginia secedes, then all the other slave states will follow her even Maryland and Delaware. I am certain of this. If we can only get clear of the Virginia convention, we will have passed the most dangerous point immediately ahead of us.

"North Carolina has elected a very large proportion of Union and conservative delegates to the convention. The vote on the convention is so very close that the official returns can only determine the result. Perhaps it may prove best that a convention shall have been called with such delegates as the people have selected in order to give a good turn to Virginia and the other border states."

"Confidential."

"GREENSBORO, N. C., March 8th.

"Since the defeat of the secessionists on the 28th in this state they have become furious. Our Governor went down to Wilmington on last Saturday among his fellow disunionists, was called, and made a speech to a large crowd of disunionists. He was bold, and defiant. He said that circumstances would soon occur, which would induce N. C. to retrace her steps, and that she would be out of the Union soon.

"The only hope of the secessionists now is that some sort of collision will be brought about between federal and state forces in one of the seceding states. I have full confidence that you in some way wiser and better than I can devise or suggest can prevent this.

"If you can do this, I believe I can say that Virginia can be kept from secession. You can do much to quiet Virginia. If the Virginia convention can adjourn without harm to the peace

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of the country, a great point will be gained. If the border states can be retained, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas will soon be back. If the others never come back, there will be no great loss. But I believe Georgia and Alabama will also soon want to return.

"If for any decent excuse the Govt. could withdraw the troops from all the southern fortifications, the moment this is known N. C., Va., Md., Del., Ky., Tenn., Md. and I believe Arkansas are certainly retained. The only thing now that gives the secessionists the advantage of the conservatives is the cry of coercion—that the whipping of a slave state, is the whipping of slavery.

"When these states come back as many of them will they will come with the fortifications. If they do not find it to their interest to return let them keep their plunder—or if any whipping is to be done let it be after the other slave states have certainly determined to remain.

"The present excitement should be allowed to pass away as soon as possible without fighting."

"Confidential."

"GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA, March 12, '61.

"You must attribute my annoyance to the great anxiety I have about the threatening aspect of things in the south. The seceders would give a kingdom for a fight in some of the seceded states.

"If the administration could yield the forts &c. under some suitable terms avoiding the right of secession, and that question be left open for the decision of Congress, it would be a grand movement.

"Under a proclamation, reciting the conduct of the late Cabinet and Executive, laying the whole blame on them, and this could be done with great propriety and would do great good. If the seceding states come back as they certainly will if let go out into the cold a while they will come back with all the forts Public property &c.

"In less than two years in these states in their state elections for members to their state legislatures it will become a question whether the candidates are for reversing the order of things, are for calling conventions, and for retroceding. This will be

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certain to happen. Louisiana will be the first to move, and then all but South Carolina will follow, and I pray that she may never come back.

"The great point is to avoid a collision.

"When the border states are once quiet in the Union, they will co-operate with the free states against the seceding. You have the mind to draw up a proclamation, which will withdraw the troops, avoid threatening, and acquiescence in the right of secession.

"You can do it with a proper protestation.

"If this is done, the country will become quiet at once, and the next step will be the gradual return of the erring states. The citizens will quit thinking about war and begin to consider the ways and means of a return.

"The cabinet and administration from and after the time they say [saw?] their party was to be defeated, have been engaged in nothing but a conspiracy most felonious against the Government. They have said to these disunionists—make haste, get out of the way during our time, make hay whilst the sun shines. On their heads let the great crime rest.

"In fact they have let things run until it is out of the power of the present administration with the means and force at command now to correct the evils or put down the rebellion. It is due to the country that all this should be proclaimed and the administration is perfectly justified in waiting for the voice of the remaining states, expressed through the next Congress."

"GREENSBORO, N. C., *April* 11, 1861.

"When I was assured in your brief reply that in your opinions my suggestions were 'judicious' hope revived within me. I have consoled myself, and duly look for a proclamation in which I should recognize clearly your ability and wisdom.

"I am so deeply distressed that my heart seems to melt within me. I cannot but still believe that the course I suggested would have been wise, and the results had it been pursued most beneficial. . . .

"If what I hear is true that we are to have fighting at Sumter or Pickens, it is what the disunionists have most courted, and I seriously apprehend that it will instantly drive the whole South into secession, and that before the end of another 60

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days at Washington City, there will be a contest that makes me shudder to contemplate.

"Truly indeed may it be said that 'madness rules the hour.'"

"*Confidential.*

"GREENSBORO, N. C., April 21, 1861.

"I have been from home, attending my courts up the country, ever since I wrote you some ten days ago. I addressed crowds of Union men. Enthusiastic demonstrations for the Union were given. I was out of the reach of the mails and telegraph. I felt sure that we should overcome the disunionists in N. C. and all the border states. All this in the face of the fight at Charleston. This had done us no harm. But yesterday evening on my return I saw for the first time this Proclamation. Soon thereafter I heard that a volunteer company in my own town, among whom was my only son, had been called for by the Governor, and that they had gone to Fort Macon, Beaufort Harbor. I came home with a sad heart. I found my own friends greatly excited. I was too full to address them. I could not rest last night.

"If I had supposed that the administration, would not pursue the policy, (or something like it) which I had urged on you, I would have returned to Washington, and have gone daily on my knees to it in behalf of my policy and to avert that shedding of human blood which now seems inevitable. Few *if any* members will be elected from any slave state to the next Congress. All hope is now extinguished. The administration, *but doubtless inadvertently*, has done the very thing which the disunionists most desired. I cannot learn whether the secession ordinance in Virginia is to be submitted to the people." . . .



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